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The Motherhood of God

A. Smythe Palmer, D.D.

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THE MOTHERHOOD OF GOD

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AND

Other Sunday Essays

BY

A. SMYTHE PALMER, D.D.

Vicar of Holy Trinity, Hermon Hill

AUTHOR OF

'A MISUNDERSTOOD MIRACLE,' 'BABYLONIAN INFLUENCE ON THE BIBLE,
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Preface

Those—and I trust they are still many—who are old-fashioned enough to read 'a good book' on Sundays, whether from preference or a sense of duty, may find something here which has not been said in quite the same way before, or at least familiar truths—some, perhaps, unfamiliar—put in a somewhat new light. Those who have grown a little weary of the conventional 'dear brethren' and 'beloved' of the pulpit may tolerate a more impersonal and less hortatory presentment of important subjects in which thinking persons *ought* to be interested. An essay, it is conceived, 'may find him who a sermon flies.'

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I

The Motherhood of God

'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.'—Is. lxvi. 13.

'Mother' is the natural synonym of 'comforter.' It may even, as we see, be used to express the consolatory relation of the Divine Comforter Himself, as one who takes His hurt and weeping child upon His knees (verse 12), and dries his tears, and dandles him till he smiles.

'The Motherhood of God' is a phrase, perhaps, that sounds strange in our ears. It is one not often used, and yet there is very sufficient warrant in Scripture for using it. We choose it the rather because it enables us to contemplate God our Maker from a less trite and conventional, and perhaps more attractive, point of view. 'The Fatherhood of God' is, no doubt, the term to which we are accustomed, and of more frequent occurrence. 'As a father pitieth his own children,' says the Psalmist, 'so doth the Lord pity them that fear Him.' And even the heathens had learnt to speak of the Great Spirit as the 'All Father' who took care of His children upon earth. Because we know of no relation more endearing, none more expressive of close union, love

and dependence, than that of a child towards its parent, we make bold to say that God is 'our Father,' and we are 'His offspring.' And God Himself graciously permits and encourages us to use such language. 'When ye pray, say, "Our Father."'

But all these human, childlike words—though the best we know—when applied to the great God, are only very imperfect approximations to the truth, which we speak with stammering lips. A moment's reflection shows us how inadequate they are. We speak of Him as 'the Father' of the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, and there our word 'Father' is manifestly inadequate, because it necessarily implies for us that the progenitor is older than his son, and existed before him at a time when he was not. But that necessary connotation is altogether excluded in speaking of the Persons of the Godhead. The Son is not more recent than the Father, nor the Father older than the Son, but both coeval and coequal together from eternity. In the same way, 'father' with us is by its implication a correlative term, necessarily involving a mother—a conception which in the spiritual world is inconceivable. All such human words, in fact, when applied to the Deity are not so much accurate definitions as more or less conventional symbols partly correct. Still, a very general name in the Bible for the Almighty is 'the Father.' And naturally so. With the Hebrews, as with most Oriental peoples, womankind occupy a position very inferior, and much less honourable than they do among the Western nations. The wife, the mother, and the daughter enjoy no such consideration as they do with us, as, indeed, we are reminded every time we repeat

the tenth commandment, which enumerates the wife amongst a man's other chattels or possessions which his neighbour must not covet or seek to appropriate.

We cannot be surprised, then, when this subordinate position was assigned to woman in Oriental society, that honorific names for the Almighty were always taken from those belonging to the male sex—always 'Father' and 'King,' never 'Mother' or 'Queen.' But it need hardly be said that, as there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus or the holy angels, still less do these earthly and temporal distinctions of sex enter into the conception of the eternal Godhead. In the very reality and inwardness of things there is no reason why God should not be looked up to as the great universal Mother of His creatures, as well as the supreme Father to whom all owe their being. Nay, there is a good reason why such an address would be appropriate. There can be no form of human goodness that has not had its source and origin in God. Therefore the distinctive character of maternal excellence, with all its exquisitely tender associations, must have already existed in the nature of the Eternal. Otherwise there would be beautiful traits in humanity which were not first immanent in the Deity. So the Godhead must be the fountain-head of all perfect human affinities—of motherhood no less than fatherhood.

'The sexual distinction,' says F. W. Robertson, 'is founded upon two radical attributes of God—His Divine love and His Divine wisdom, whereof the former is feminine, and the latter masculine.'* The womanly

* F. W. Robertson, 'Life and Letters,' p. 234. Compare R. J. Campbell, 'Humanity in Deity,' a sermon.

quality of gentleness and tenderness, and the manlike attributes of justice and sternness, belong alike to Him who is 'full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy and truth; keeping mercy for thousands forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin: and [at the same time] that will by no means clear the guilty' (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7). It is good for us at times thus to throw off the tyranny of words—which, after all, are only stereotyped conventions, and often a fruitful source of error and confusion—and to penetrate beyond language to the unseen essences of things which come unnamed to our hearts and consciences.

Man in his state of nature, when feeling after God if haply he might find Him, has often surmised that He must be the Mother of His children as well as their Father. A mother, he felt, has a loving tenderness beyond what is expected in a father. A woman has a power of sympathy and a capacity for self-sacrifice more than is found in man. For is not a true mother the least imperfect representation of that Divine character which combines in one love and thoughtfulness, softness and self-devotion? 'The most womanly mother,' it has been finely said,* 'brooding over the child sleeping in her arms, may give us a truer idea of what God in His good providence is than we might gain from all the abstractions of our philosophy.' And therefore the Bible sums up its revelations of the Father in one intensely human word, 'God is love.'

It was not surprising, therefore, that when the early inhabitants of the earth constructed, as it were, a God out of their own inner consciousness, they often thought

* Newman Smyth, 'Old Faiths in New Light,' p. 123.

of Him, as primitive races do still, as a female Being, with qualities pertaining to the loftiest conceptions they could form of perfect woman and of perfect man. Womanhood has been the inspiring element of many creeds—the ideal recipient of man's impulses of adoring love; 'from the painter who invokes upon his canvas a Virgin revealed in sleep, to the philosopher who preaches the worship of Humanity in a woman's likeness, to be at once the Mother and the Beloved of all.' *

Goethe, accordingly, finds the all-redeeming, all-uplifting power of Divine love symbolised in its purest and most perfect form in womanliness (*Ewig-weibliche*):

> 'All that is transitory
> Is only a symbol. . . .
> The eternal womanly
> Draws us onward and upward.'

I have brought together in a note† a number of instances in which this has been the inspiring motive of heathen religions. It is more important for our present purpose to note that in the earliest stage of Semitic religion the relation of the Deity to the people was conceived as that of motherhood. The mother-goddess, or 'the great mother,' was worshipped by various branches of this stock. No doubt the use of a name appropriated to the tenderest and truest of human relationships was associated in acts of worship with feelings of peculiar warmth and trustful devotion. On the other hand, the associations called forth when the Deity was conceived as a father were, on the whole, of an austerer kind, for the distinctive note of fatherhood lay mainly

* F. W. W. Myers, 'Modern Essays,' p. 329.
† See note at end of essay.

in parental authority, in the father's claim to be *served* by his son, as a master is served by his servant (Mal. iii. 17). 'To this day the grown-up son in Arabia serves his father in much the same offices as the domestic slave, and approaches him with much the same degree of reverence, and even of constraint.'*

It was natural and right that men in early ages, in their various tongues and in all quarters of the world, should call upon God with the word 'Father,' as they did; but it is perhaps even more suggestive and beautiful to find that they also saluted the Great Being as 'Mother.' On the image of an ancient shrine are inscribed the words, 'Thou art the Father, and Thou art the Mother.' The ancient Babylonians regarded their supreme deity, Anu, as the father and mother of all spirits. It was from their example that the Israelites lapsed into the practice, condemned by Jeremiah (xliv. 17), of burning incense to a Queen of Heaven. And similarly the Hindus have their female deities, whom they call 'divine mothers' (*matris*), for, as one of their own prophets has taught them, 'A mother exceeds in value a thousand fathers.'† Indeed, it is interesting to remember that this word *matri* and our own word 'mother' long, long ago bore the meaning of creator or maker (*matar*) in the old Indian hymns of the Vedas.

When primitive worshippers spoke of God as their Father, it was, as we have seen, with something of fear and trembling, as of a just and righteous Governor who possessed the absolute power of life and death over

* W. Robertson Smith, 'Religion of Semites,' pp. 52-60.
† 'Manu' in Monier Williams's 'Indian Wisdom,' p. 440.

His children, to dispose of them as He pleased, because this was their ordinary experience of what their earthly father was ; and thus they had an exalted idea of God's will and wisdom and power, the corresponding feelings called forth on their part being submission, honour, and obedience. Through the earthly father they learned to trust in a superior guidance in the affairs of life, and in a watchful Providence working for their benefit.

But the hearts of men craved for something more than this, for a closer and dearer relationship. They yearned for a Being more tender and gentle and sympathetic, whom they could cling to and love with something of the human affection with which they nestled up to their earthly mother for warmth and comfort and caress.

It is, no doubt, to this natural instinct of the human heart that we may trace the exaggerated honour paid to the Blessed Virgin in Roman Catholic countries. She, they fancied, must be the Divine Mother they craved for, the feminine counterpart to the sterner qualities conceived as belonging to the Divine Father.* If sovereignty, justice, wisdom, were the peculiar attributes of the King of Heaven, then, on the other hand, meekness and softness, mercy and lovingkindness, seemed only due as the distinctively feminine graces of Mary as its Queen. These lovable qualities, they argued, must be embodied in a person that they could worship, and that person a woman, and who else could this possibly be but the Virgin Mother of the Lord ? Goethe admits this idea when in his mystic Symphony of Love

* Compare M. Clermont-Ganneau on the feminine *parèdre* of Jehovah in the *Revue Critique*, January 12 and March 1, 1880.

he introduces the Mater Gloriosa as the representative of the sweetest and tenderest attribute of the Deity, mercy to the penitent.* A Roman Catholic, unfolding the rationale of her devotion, thus draws the contrast:

'All hearts are touched and softened at her name . . .
And even as children, who have much offended
A too indulgent father, in great shame,
Penitent, and yet not daring unattended
To go into his presence, at the gate
Speak with their sister, and confiding wait
Till she goes in before and intercedes;
So men, repenting of their evil deeds,
And yet not venturing rashly to draw near
With their requests an angry Father's ear,
Offer to her their prayers and their confession,
And she for them in heaven makes intercession.'†

This readier affiance in the Virgin, it is needless to say, is a grave dishonour done to God, an idolising of the creature to the disparagement of the Creator, as if she were more merciful, more approachable than He. It was only the perversion of an instinct seeking to recognise in God the distinctive excellency of womanhood, the sanctity of motherhood; the mistake of the Roman Catholic Church in setting up the ideal of female perfection in Mary over against the ideal of manly perfection in the Lord Jesus Christ. The true object of their desire they should have found in Him who in His own Divine person as 'the Son of man' blends the peculiar excellencies of both sexes—Divine womanliness and Divine manliness; all that is most feminine with all that is most masculine; the woman-heart as well as manly courage and endurance; the most pure and gentle and patient qualities no less than the sterner

* Goethe, 'Faust,' part ii., act 5.
† Longfellow, 'The Golden Legend,' v.

virtues of justice, fortitude and truth. 'The man-woman in Christ,' says Tennyson, 'is the union of tenderness and strength.'* It combines the best qualities of both the sexes in perfect balance as perfect humanity.

But it must never be forgotten that there was no Divine feature in Jesus Christ which was not first in God the Father. It is He who is revealed to us in the person of His Son, and if we carefully consider it we find the same beautiful feminine attributes which make Jesus so lovable belonging also to God the Father. In many a passage of Scripture He is spoken of as having the tender affection towards us of a mother for the children with whom she has travailed and brought painfully into the world. Thus Moses remonstrates with unfilial Israel,

> 'Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful,
> And hast forgotten God that travailed with thee,'

or 'gave thee birth' (Deut. xxxii. 18). So the Psalmist says: 'Thou gavest birth to the earth and the world' (Ps. xc. 2); and even more strikingly St. James: 'Of His own will He brought us forth . . . that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures' (i. 18). He employs the special word for maternal bearing (ἀπεκύησε). 'He gave birth to us,' and so must have a maternal love for our souls. The Apostle strikes the chord of human sympathies when he implies that the Creator is to us in the place of a mother as well as of a father—an intimation already made by the Psalmist, 'When my father

* Tennyson, 'Life,' i. 326. Compare F. W. Robertson, 'Sermons,' ii. 269.

and my mother forsake me, the Lord taketh me up,' a truer parent than they.

It is interesting also to notice that the Hebrew word *rachamîm*, frequently used for the tender mercy and lovingkindness of the Lord (Ps. xxv. 6, xl. 11) is essentially the same as the word for the matrix (*rechem*), or differential organ of maternity, and denotes the physical yearning of a mother over 'the son of her *womb*.' With this usage we bring into comparison the passage in Deuteronomy (i. 31) which says that God, in bringing His people through the wilderness, for forty years carried them in His bosom, and nursed them like a sucking child (so Num. xi. 12; Acts xiii. 18). By a gracious condescension—anthropomorphism, as we call it, or human-formity—he was a Mother to the wanderers:

'The Lord is never far away,
But through all grief distressing
An ever-present help and stay,
Our peace and joy and blessing.
As with a mother's tending hand
He leads His own, His chosen band.'

By a similar figure Moses likens God's tender care and loving providence for His children to the anxiety of the brooding hen, or other self-sacrificing mother-bird which covers her defenceless nestlings with the outspreading of her wings (Deut. xxxii. 11):

'As an eagle that stirreth up her nest,
That fluttereth over her young,
He spread abroad His wings, He took them,
He bare them on His pinions:
The Lord alone did lead him.'

Isaiah, again, when he would show how 'the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind,' can find no better

comparison for His watchful love and ever-mindful care than the same feathered incarnation of motherly anxiety. When the birds of prey are swooping down upon the Holy City, the prophet says: 'As little mother-birds hovering, so will Jehovah of Hosts protect Jerusalem' (Is. xxxi. 5).*

The same beautiful figure is used in the Book of Baruch (iv. 8): 'Ye have forgotten the everlasting God that *nursed* you' (τροφεύω, as in Exod. ii. 7, of Moses' nurse). And the Lord Jesus Himself adopted it to express His own yearning love for the unbelieving Jews of His day: 'How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!' The Divine wisdom throughout the earlier chapters of Proverbs is introduced as a feminine personification and spiritual parent who appeals with motherly tenderness to her foolish and erring children, and this feminine wisdom is identified in the Gospels with the Saviour (St. Luke xi. 49 compared with St. Matt. xxiii. 34).

We may take it, then, that maternal love is nearest and likest to the Divine. When a great master of fiction is expressing his pity for the lonely, loveless child of a hard, worldly mother, he utters this fine dictum: 'Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of little children.'† It is the natural instinct of childhood to combine the two ideas.

When George Sand (Aurora Dupin), as a little untaught girl, endeavoured to form a divinity for herself, she invested this being, whom she called Corambé, with

* So G. Adam Smith, 'Book of Isaiah,' i. 245.
† Thackeray, 'Vanity Fair,' p. 264 (ed. 1882).

the guise of a woman, because, she says, 'that which I had up to this time loved the best, and understood the best, was a woman—my mother. And so it was often under the semblance of a woman that he appeared to me.'* But children of a larger growth have thought the same. 'When I see the tenderness of sweet, kind women,' says Dr. Wendell Holmes, 'I can understand Theodore Parker's insisting on the *maternal* element in the Divine Being. I think the most encouraging hint with reference to the future of those helpless infants whom we call men and women is that He who made the heart of a mother would find it hard to quite give up a child.'†

'Paradise is at the foot of the mother,' said Mohammed.‡ On one occasion, when a man had robbed a nest, and admired the persistence with which the mother-bird kept flitting around his head, the prophet asked: 'Do you wonder at the affection of the mother towards her young? I swear by Him who sent me, Verily God is more loving to His servants than the mother to these birds. Return them to the place from which you took them, and let their mother be with them.'§

Surely this conception of the maternal love of God is one eminently adapted to soften the hardest heart that ever stood out against His gracious pleadings and resisted His commands. The very name of mother has a magic power to unlock the closest feelings of the heart.

* George Sand, 'Histoire de ma Vie.'
† J. R. Morse, 'Life of O. W. Holmes,' ii. 231.
‡ Syed Ameer Ali, 'Life and Teachings of Mohammed,' p. 316.
§ *Op. cit.*, p. 255.

'I love the sound! the sweetest under heaven,
That name of mother!'

says a modern poet.* 'What would I not give,' said another, in sad retrospect, 'to call my dear mother back to earth for a single day; to ask her pardon upon my knees for all those acts by which I grieved her gentle spirit!'†

Well and truly, therefore, does Mr. Baring-Gould close the first volume of his 'Origin and Development of Religious Belief' with the words: 'The softest spot in man's heart is the love of his mother; religion claims that spot on which to build a sanctuary, and if man may not look up to and address a mother in heaven, his filial love will maternalise and deify Nature.'‡

The worshippers of ancient India in their Veda hymns gave clear expression to this universal feeling of humanity: 'Thou art our Father, Thou art our Mother, Thou art our beloved Friend, Thou art the Source of all strength, Thou art He that bearest the burdens of the universe; help me to bear the little burdens of this life.'§

The same emotion finds rapturous utterance in an exponent of the theism of modern India. His words are so catholic and inspiring that I shall be forgiven for quoting them: 'The first ideal of the Brahma-Somaj [so this Eclectic Church is named] is the ideal of the motherhood of God. The world has heard of God as

* Eric Mackay.
† Charles Lamb.
‡ S. Baring-Gould, 'Origin and Development of Religious Belief,' i. 422.
§ 'The World's Congress of Religions,' p. 191.

the Almighty Creator of the universe; as the Omnipotent Sovereign that rules the entire creation; as the Protector, the Saviour, and the Judge of the human race; as the Supreme Being vivifying and enlivening the whole of the sentient and insentient nature. We humbly believe that the world has yet to understand and realise, as it never has in the past, the tender and loving relationship that exists between mankind and their supreme, universal, Divine Mother. Oh, what a world of thought and feeling is centred in that one monosyllabic word—*ma*—which in my language is indicative of the English word "mother." Words cannot describe, hearts cannot conceive, the tender and self-sacrificing love of a human mother. Of all human relations, the relation of a mother to her children is the most sacred and elevating. And yet our frail and fickle human mother is nothing in comparison with the Divine Mother of the entire humanity, who is the primal Source of all love, of all mercy, of all purity. Let us therefore realise that God is our Mother, the Mother of mankind, irrespective of the country or the clime in which men and women may be born. The deeper the realisation of the Motherhood of God, the greater will be the strength and intensity of our ideas of the brotherhood of man and the sisterhood of woman.'*

This conception seems to appeal with irresistible power to the best of the Hindus. Thus, the Vedantist Râmakrishna declares: 'Though He may be worshipped variously, some loving to call Him Father, others Mother . . . yet it is one God that is being worshipped in all

* B. B. Nargarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

these various relations and modes.'* And it is evident that the latter mode was the one which he himself preferred, as we are told that 'the purely human devotion and love which he expressed for his Divine Mother was sometimes most startling.'†

And even for ourselves, our religious terminology is apt to grow so trite and outworn, it may be that this comparatively new conception will come home to us with a vivid freshness which the more familiar words have wellnigh lost. The hardest and roughest natures, which seemed insensate and inaccessible to other influences, will melt—one would fain hope—at the more tender associations which carry them back to those happy days when they were yet infants on their mother's breast and played by their mother's knee. Thus, the obdurate sinner who rebelled against the rule and authority of God when He strove to control him as a Father will yield before the softening power of a love that yearns over him, even as a mother, with glistening eyes, yearns over the son of her womb. She cannot cast him out of her heart, even if a prodigal, or forget that he is her own child. And yet even this tenderest love of a mother is but a pale reflection of that far more glowing love with which God hangs over His erring children, and holds them to His breast, while 'underneath are the everlasting arms' (Deut. xxxiii. 27).

'No earthly father loves like Thee,
No mother e'er so mild
Bears and forbears as Thou hast done
With me, Thy sinful child.'

* Max Müller, 'Auld Lang Syne,' 2nd series, p. 108.
† *Op. cit.*, p. 111.

When Zion in old time peevishly complained, 'The Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me,' how marvellously gracious are the words with which He at once silences and reassures the murmurs and doubts of His unworthy people!—'Can a *woman* forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, *these may* forget, yet will not I forget thee.' 'His love to them was wonderful, *passing* the love of woman.' It is hardly more than a paraphrase of those words when William Blake so sweetly sings:

'Can a mother sit and hear
An infant groan, an infant fear?
No, no! never can it be!
Never, never can it be!

'And can He, who smiles on all,
Hear the wren, with sorrows small,
Hear the small bird's grief and care,
Hear the woes that infants bear;

'And not sit beside the nest,
Pouring pity in their breast?
And not sit the cradle near,
Weeping tear on infant's tear?

'And not sit both night and day
Wiping all our tears away?
Oh, no, never can it be!
Never, never can it be!'

NOTE.

MOTHER-DEITIES IN HEATHENISM.

'The emotional side of Semitic heathenism was always very much connected with the worship of female deities' (W. Robertson Smith, 'Religion of the Semites,' p. 59). 'A great mother-goddess was venerated by the Babylonians, Carthaginians, and Arabians' (*ibid.*, p. 56; S. I. Curtiss, 'Primitive Semitic Religion To-Day,' p. 262). Among the ancient Egyptians 'God (*nutar*) is father and mother' (inscription in Brugsch, 'Religion und

Mythologie der alten Egypten,' 1884, p. 98). The creator-god (*Khnemu*) is addressed as 'the beginning of beings, father of fathers and mother of mothers (*mā mā*)' (Budge, 'Book of the Dead,' 1895, p. cix.).

Mat or Mut, the 'mother,' was revered as the goddess of Thebes, and it is remarkable that the god Shu is sometimes called 'the very great goddess' (Tiele, 'The Egyptian Religion,' pp. 153, 156). Dr. Brinton observes that in primitive myths the deity is regarded as bi-sexual rather than non-sexual in nature, and is frequently addressed as 'father-mother' or 'mother-father' ('Religion of Primitive Peoples,' p. 169). Similarly, the god of the sky is called on by Vedic worshippers as father and mother and friend (M. Müller, 'Select Essays,' ii. 67). Aditi, the Infinite, is 'the mother with her sons' (M. Müller, 'The Vedas,' i. 243). The Canaanite place-name Anâthôth means the 'heaven-mothers.'

In Northern India the worship of the Great Mothers is an obscure but popular cult widely prevalent, and believed to be of extreme antiquity. The greatest of all the mother-goddesses of the Râjputs is Mâmâ Devi, 'the mother of the gods' (W. Crooke, 'Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India,' i. 111-117).

Indeed, mother-worship is extended everywhere throughout India. The divine Mātṛis, or mothers, are the favourite objects of adoration, as having a more placable nature than the male god, and more easily propitiated by prayer and offerings. Every village had its own special guardian mother, called Mātā or Ambā (M. Williams, 'Brahmanism and Hinduism,' p. 222).

The god Siva is believed to combine in his own person maternal as well as paternal qualities and attributes, and all the mothers of India are simply manifestations of portions of his essence (*ibid.*, p. 225).

This idea of God's Motherhood as a correlative to God's Fatherhood is an essential characteristic of Hinduism (*ibid.*, p. 515). It speaks of Parama-mātā, 'supreme mother,' as well as Parama-pitā, 'supreme father,' when referring to God (*ibid.*, p. 522).

The worship of the Great Mother, to whom the Metrôön, west of Areopagus, was dedicated at Athens, whether as Cybele or Dêmêter, the food-giving earth, had a deep hold of the popular mind of Greece (Dyer, 'Gods in Greece,' pp. 51, 69; Harrison and Verrall, 'Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens,' pp. 43-51). To her correspond the Hindu Dhartî Mâtâ, 'the earth-mother' (Crooke, *op. cit.*, i. 111), and the Teutonic 'Mother Earth' (Grimm, 'Teutonic Myth,' pp. 251, 254). Professor Rhys Davids contends that the earliest divinities were goddesses, whence he infers that they originated with women, who were the first theologians ('Buddhism,' pp. 11, 12). Among the Romans Q. Valerius Soranus is quoted by Augustine in his 'City of God

(vii. 9) as describing Jupiter as 'progenitor genetrixque deûm,' 'father and mother of the gods,' on which the commentators cite a line from an Orphic hymn:

'Zeus as a man begets as woman breeds.'

St. Augustine adds that Jupiter as being father and mother in one was styled Ruminus and Rumina, the suckler (J. H. 'City of God,' 1620, pp. 268, 269). Plutarch in his 'Life of Marcellus' mentions that the ancient city of Engyium in Sicily was famous for a temple consecrated to the goddesses called the Mothers; thence Goethe borrowed his mystic allusion in the 'Faust,' part ii., act i., scene 5:

'They are The Mothers!
Goddesses unknown to ye;
The Mortals—named by us unwillingly:
Delve in the deepest depths must thou to reach them.'

See Bayard Taylor, note *in loco*.

Scarcely less enigmatical than these were the three Deæ Matres or Matronæ, altars dedicated to whom are found in Gaul, Germany, and along the Rhine (T. Wright, 'The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon,' 3rd ed., pp. 338-342). These Divine Mothers of Gaulish paganism were only slowly superseded by the Madonna of Christianity (Rhys, 'Celtic Heathendom,' pp. 100-103).

The Emperor Julian used to address a prayer to 'the mother of gods and men, the life-bearing mother, the wisdom and providence and creatress of our souls' (G. H. Rendall, 'Julian,' p. 140).

Some early Christians taught that the Holy Spirit was the feminine principle in God. Jerome says that in the Gospel according to the Hebrews the Saviour said, 'Just now My Mother, the Holy Spirit, took Me by one of My hairs' (see E. B. Nicholson, 'Gospel according to the Hebrews,' p. 17; and so Origen: see Salmon, 'Introd. to New Testament, p. 179, 2nd ed.; C. J. Wood, 'Survivals in Christianity,' p. 63). Similarly, Victorinus (4th cent.) symbolised the Holy Ghost as the female principle, the 'Mother of Christ' in His eternal life (W. R. Inge, 'Christian Mysticism,' p. 127). Compare 'the Spirit of God broods over them as a mother over her babe' (G. A. Smith, 'Book of Isaiah,' i. 246).

'For Thou to us art more than father,
More than mother in Thy love,
So tender, patient, and forgiving,
Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove.'

A recent curious volume on the Trinity thinks it necessary to

find the attributes of patience, tenderness, and nurture in the Holy Ghost as the Divine Mother (F. A. Hyndman, 'The Time of Transition,' 1901).

'A conception of a divine person, or manifestation of the female sex, had been one of the notions of the old Jewish Cabalists, and was diffused through almost all the sects of the Gnostics. In this way, long before Catholic Mariolatry had acquired its full proportions, a very large section of the Christian world had been accustomed to concentrate much attention upon a female ideal as one of the two central figures of devotion' (Lecky, 'History of Rationalism,' i. 207-211, 7th ed.).

'The charms of a female ideal were recognised in the mediæval conception of the Virgin. The moral charm and beauty of female excellence were fully felt. Into a harsh and ignorant age this ideal type infused a conception of gentleness and of purity unknown to the proudest civilizations of the past. All that was best in Europe clustered around it, and it is the origin of many of the purest elements of our civilization' (*ibid.*, p. 214).

The most common object of veneration among the Buddhists of China is Kwan-yin, 'she who hears men's cries,' the goddess of mercy (S. Beal, 'Buddhism in China,' p. 119). Another goddess, simply called 'Mother,' is the most frequently worshipped deity in some parts of China (J. Doolittle, 'Social Life of the Chinese,' pp. 97, 208).

The aboriginal Ainus call upon God as the 'Cradle' or 'Nourisher,' meaning the great 'All-Mother' of His creatures (J. Batchelor, 'The Ainu and their Folklore,' p. 584). The Indian tribes along the Amazon never use the word 'father' of their deities, but always 'mother' (H. C. Tucker, 'The Bible in Brazil,' 1902).

Two little volumes entitled 'Womanhood in the God-man,' by Ernest Mason,' and 'The Motherhood of Jesus,' by Evan Thomas, I have not seen.

II

The Opiate Cup

'They gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not.'—St. Mark xv. 23.

As Christian men and women we are taught in every point of duty to look for guidance to our great Exemplar, the Lord Jesus Christ. And we do so with the more confidence because we know that He was in all points tempted like as we are, and that He has gone before us in the rough path of life, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps.

But the question is likely to arise, Were there not certain forms of trial which, only too well known to us, must have been unknown to our sinless Master? Was the Lord Jesus ever tempted—or *could* He be—in the matter of strong drink? Was there anything in Him, infirmity of the flesh or bodily craving, to which such a temptation could appeal? If there was not, then He could not have felt the pressure of a fleshly inclination which many experience sorely, and so far he would not be like ourselves—a whole region of our trial would be unknown to Him. It is to this question, I think, that we may find an answer in the text, though it may not be obvious at first sight. Let us, then, consider it.

There is no doubt that the Lord Jesus was not a total abstainer from wine. There would have been no sense or meaning in the reproach which the malice of His enemies directed against Him, that He was a drinker of wine—a 'wine-bibber'—if it were a known fact that He never touched it. We may freely admit that the Lord Himself in all probability partook of the excellent wine which He Himself created at the marriage festival. So long as the partaking of strong drink was innocent and kept within the bounds of strict moderation the Lord did not think it necessary to decline it. But there was at least one occasion when He strenuously and absolutely refused to touch it. When it came to Him as a real temptation, appealing most powerfully to the weakness of His humanity, He put it from Him with stern, steadfast resolution. When His cruel persecutors had brought Him up to Calvary, and the dreadful hour of all hours, so long expected, was at last come, and He was standing face to face with the ghastly horrors of the crucifixion, then some good soul with pitying hand pressed upon Him a cup of wine mingled with myrrh. It was kindly intended as a soporific and stupefying draught that would lull the pain and make the sufferer unconscious in His coming torture. We are indebted here to the Jewish Talmud for one of those interesting side-lights which it sometimes throws on Scripture. It tells us that at this time some charitable ladies at Jerusalem had formed a society for providing a beverage of mixed myrrh and vinegar to be given to criminals when being carried to execution.* It was an opiate designed to benumb the

* Deutsch, 'Literary Remains,' p. 38.

unhappy man's faculties, and so mitigate his sufferings —one of many proofs of woman's sympathy and pity shown to the Lord in His last trial. They based this merciful practice on a passage in Prov. xxxi., the chapter which is a mirror of virtuous womanhood : 'Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more' (verses 6, 7). In the days of the Christian martyrs the custom survived, and their sympathising friends used sometimes in compassion to offer them such a cup on their journey to the place of execution. And in much the same way even in London, formerly, malefactors on their way to the gallows at Tyburn were stopped at a certain point of the road to receive a bowl of intoxicating drink. The same was the object of the draught of medicated wine which some merciful hand tendered to the Lord Jesus within sight of Calvary.

> 'The very torturers paused
> To help Him on His way—
> Fill high the bowl, benumb His aching sense
> With medicined sleep.'

But mark this well : 'He received it not.' The two malefactors that went with Him to death, we may well believe, took it gladly and freely. But Jesus would not have it. Irresistibly desirable and seductive as any offering would seem at such a moment which could promise obliviousness in the long hours of approaching agony, any 'drowsy syrup' that would dull and stupefy the shrinking nerves and render them less keenly alive to the excruciating agony of the cross—yet Jesus 'received it not.' The others in their lower organizations

might hail the boon, but it was not fitting for the Royal Way of the Cross, with its higher calls of duty.

'It is not for kings to drink wine;
Nor for princes to say, "Where is strong drink?"
Lest they drink and forget that which is decreed.'*

What patient nowadays that cowered back with shrinking from the surgeon's knife would willingly dispense with the blessed oblivion of chloroform or ether? Yet here was One who utterly and absolutely refused the anodyne, and would not let it pass His thirsting lips. 'He received it not.' Had he not a far other 'cup' to drink of, which His Father had given Him to drink?—the cup of suffering which could not pass away from Him, and must be drained to the very dregs. This He was resolved to drink in full consciousness and possession of all His faculties, exercising a clear and continued effort of His will up to the very last. He would not, could not, die with a clouded brain and enfeebled will. How else could He ever pronounce the solemn words of consummation: 'Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit'? It is the natural wish still of every dying Christian:

'I would the light of reason, Lord,
Up to the last might shine,
That my own hands might hold my soul
Until it passed to Thine.'

Although His sensitive, tender soul trembled before that hour of darkness, as the lily quakes before the black, gathering tempest, yet He endured and suffered in the great, calm serenity of His spirit. While wicked men did their worst, in patience possessed He His

* Prov. xxxi. 4, 5.

soul. He chose rather to look Death in the face, to meet the King of Terrors with eyes that would not shrink or waver, 'without seeking to deaden one agonising fear or still the throbbing of one lacerated nerve.' The medicated wine would have done that for Him, but with the sublimest heroism He put it aside, and 'received it not.'

'But as at first Thine all-pervading look
Saw from Thy Father's bosom to th' abyss,
Measuring in calm presage
The infinite descent;

'So to the end, though now of mortal pangs
Made heir, and emptied of Thy glory awhile,
With unaverted eye
Thou meetest all the storm.

'Thou wilt feel all, that Thou mayst pity all;
And rather wouldst Thou wrestle with strong pain
Than overcloud Thy soul
So clear in agony.'*

May we not humbly suppose that the Master here wished at the same time to teach His followers a needful lesson, not to seek refuge in any such sensual anodynes from the pains and punishments with which God may be pleased to chasten them? It is here that the Lord's act bears upon the subject of abstinence from strong drink as becoming at times a Christian man's duty. It was felt to be so literally by good Sir Thomas More when in his hour of martyrdom he was brought from the Tower toward the place of execution, and 'a good woman offered him wine to drinke. Marrie, good wife (quoth he) I will not drinke now. My Maister had easell [vinegar] and gall, and not wine given Him to

* Keble, 'Christian Year': 'Tuesday before Easter.'

drinke.'* And it is recorded of another sturdy Christian, Dr. Johnson, when he was told by his doctor that his end was near, 'Then,' said he, 'I will take no more physic, not even my opiates; for I have prayed that I may render up my soul to God unclouded.' In this resolution he persevered amid all his bodily distress and mental sufferings, saying, 'I will take anything but inebriating sustenance.'†

Let us inquire for a moment what are the predisposing causes which lead most men into intemperance. Is it merely that the indulgence in drink gratifies the palate and is pleasant to the taste, and that men find the same kind of pleasure in this that children find in cakes and sweetmeats? I do not think so. In most cases the reason lies deeper. We shall be the more ready and able to compassionate and sympathise with the hapless victims who are enslaved to this sin, better able to reason with them, and perhaps help them and do them some good, if we frankly recognise the true causes which make strong drink so seductive to them, so wellnigh irresistible.

Now, if we could read and analyse men's motives for excess, we would probably discover that in many cases the predisposing causes were either physical pain, bodily discomfort, or mental debility, and a wounded spirit which they had not the manly fortitude to endure. The natural man, who is in bondage to the flesh, has a strong inclination to escape from the besetting ills that flesh is heir to, or at least fortify himself against them, by recourse to intoxicants. He seeks in them

* C. Wordsworth, 'Ecclesiastical Biography,' 1810, ii. 221.
† Boswell, 'Life of Johnson,' *sub anno* 1784.

alleviation or partial forgetfulness for what Moses calls 'a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind.' There is an internal sinking and craving emptiness, a nervous debility, a feeling of futility, lassitude, and weariness, from which many suffer, women even more than men; and this, it cannot be denied, is a potent cause why some are led into a system of dram-drinking which grows upon them more and more the more it is indulged. It seems to dull the sense of pain for the time being. Most doctors know of such cases, and how difficult that habit is to break. In former times, before chloroform and other anæsthetics were discovered, it was not an uncommon thing for surgeons to make their patient fairly drunk in order that in a half-insensible state he might be better able to bear the pain of an operation. And as some people still, in an evil moment, have recourse to opium as a panacea to dull and mitigate the physical pain of a gnawing disease, so others fly to drink for temporary relief from mental ills, the 'world-smart' or lifeache. Strong drink affords them, they imagine, the readiest means of escape from the grinding cares and petty worries of life. Under its anodyne influence they manage to forget the annoyances of business, the vexations and distresses which throng around them in their everyday existence.

F. W. Robertson, writing to a friend who was meditating taking morphine as an opiate for his grief, gives him this earnest admonition: 'Do you not know what keeps the gin-palaces open? Misery. The miserable go there to forget. You must not, and shall not, do it, for it is degradation. I would have you condescend to no miserable materialism to escape your sorrow. Remember what Maria Theresa said

when she began to doze in dying: "I want to meet my God awake." Remember that *He* refused the medicated opiate on [the way to] the Cross. Meet misery awake. Summon the force to bear, out of your own heart and the divine that dwells there, not out of the laudanum bottle.'*

Something higher is needed to minister to a mind diseased. For a brief moment, indeed, all sublunary troubles are driven away while the thoughtless drunkard voluntarily discrowns himself. We sometimes express our wonder that any human being can so degrade himself and bring himself down to the level of the brute. But this is exactly what he *wants* to do. He wants desperately to divest himself of all those high prerogatives of reason, reflection, and responsibility with which his Maker has endowed him. Man is distinguished from the mere animal by the power of reflecting on the past, realising the present, and looking onward to the future. He has a conscience or moral sense which sits in judgment on all his actions, and is continually lifting its voice to upbraid him with his wrong-doing. It is to get rid of this inconvenient friend that he drinks. He is on bad terms with himself, and this is one source of the pain and uneasiness which he longs to escape from. So he drugs his conscience and silences its reproaches by resigning his spiritual pre-eminence, which is to him only sadness and misery. He takes to strong drink, and for the time enjoys the envied irresponsibility of the beast, with no care or heed, no misgivings, no remorse. Content to be as the beast that perisheth, reckless and indifferent, he dehumanises himself and brutalises himself; he lies down in the sty of

* 'Life and Letters,' p. 213.

gross indulgence, and revels in his bestial contentment, less than a man. No, not contentment; for man cannot discrown himself in this way. Between times, when the intoxication passes off, the drugged and silenced conscience recovers its smothered voice, and cries out more loudly than ever against the coward who fled from its reproof, and wilfully stopped his ears to its warnings by courting deafness. How sad beyond measure are these words from Lamb's 'Confessions of a Drunkard': 'I have known one in that state when he has tried to abstain but for one evening, though the potion had long ceased to bring back its first enchantments, though he was sure it would rather deepen his gloom than brighten it—I have known him to scream out, to cry aloud, for the anguish and pain of the strife within him.' This is what comes 'at the last'—the serpent's bite, the adder's sting.

Another predisposing cause of drunkeness, we can well believe, is the dreary monotony of the life which too many are compelled to lead. Man is a many-sided being. He has an imaginative and spiritual faculty which craves for variety, beauty, and pleasurable excitement. He cannot go on the beaten track like a mill-horse every day and all day long, the one dull, inevitable round, and feel no imperious longing for higher and better things. His spirit, cramped and starved, rises in rebellion, and *will* get uplifted somehow. If he has no intellectual enjoyments, such as music and fiction, and art and science, can give, no proper outlet for the soaring of his spirit, then he takes up, for want of something better, with the low and base excitement which drink can give him. For the time he is 'elevated,'

as he himself would say, lifted up high above the low drudgery of the real into a visionary world of brightness and vivid exaltation, where he seems to soar and swim and expatiate at large. It is glorious! If he cannot find any true rational pleasure, he grasps at this poor semblance of it, a phantom enjoyment. It is but too true that, if some people drink too much, it is to a great extent in a desire to escape from themselves and their surroundings. There is a striking and suggestive saying attributed to one of her late Majesty's Judges, that when on circuit he visited the smoky, sordid city of Manchester he made the remark, 'I understand now why people get drunk here. It is the shortest way out of Manchester.'

This is a strong argument in itself why every man should have time and opportunity for legitimate recreation, and why the wholesome pleasure of books and lectures and excursions should be placed within his reach, that he may not be driven to the bottle by mere vacuity and boredom. If a drunkard makes a bad home, it is likewise true that a bad home often makes a drunkard. If a man is obliged to work and sleep in a foul, depressing atmosphere, Nature, since it cannot have its necessary oxygen, cries out for some artificial stimulant. The gin-shop is never far off from vile tenements. Let the working man have pure air, a better dwelling, and wholesome amusement, and he will certainly be less tempted by impure drink.

Another more subtle form of the same temptation, which we can only glance at, is that which in attractive guise presents itself to the refined epicurean, who sits apart and above the common world in a paradise of

books and culture. He wraps himself up in selfish ease, and sips the sweet cup of oblivion as to the sordid cares and miseries of his fellow-men. His is the dreamy indifference of the lotos-eater, who, having once eaten of the fruit of that enchanted stem, straightway forgot child and wife and slave, hardly conscious of the gushing of the wave which 'far, far away, did seem to mourn and rave on alien shores.' Or, as Archbishop Trench finely expresses this temptation of higher natures :

> 'How pleasant were it there in dim recess,
> In some close-curtained haunt of quietness,
> To hear no tones of human pain and care,
> Our own or others', little heeding there,
> If morn or noon or night
> Pursued their weary flight,
> But musing what an easy thing it were
> To mix our opiates in a larger cup,
> And drink, and not perceive
> Sleep deepening lead his truer kinsman up,
> Like undistinguished Night, darkening the skirts of Eve.'*

Here again the Saviour rejected the cup of witchery. 'I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work' (St. John ix. 4). 'Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you' (xii. 35).

Now, it is a great truth that to overcome evil we must dispossess it by good. 'To conquer you must replace,' said Napoleon. Christianity recognises that principle. It seeks to replace the allurements to sin by other motives and other attractions which are higher, deeper, mightier. St. Paul, for instance, is not content to give a merely negative command, 'Resist intem-

* Trench, 'Poems': 'Ode to Sleep,' 1865, p. 89.

perance,' but he gives a positive injunction how it is to be done: 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but *be filled with the Spirit.*' What a contrast, and what an antidote! Intoxicating spirits — so called because they were once conceived to be the vehicle of airy, volatile beings who possessed men as demons did —affect the mind and soul with energising power. These base lower spirits must be exorcised and dispossessed by one more potent. They must be met and resisted by means of the Holy Spirit of God, the Spirit of strength, who alone can enable us to withstand the temptations of the flesh. He, if we seek His aid, can enable us with pure hearts and minds herein to follow the example of our Saviour Christ.

The world came to Him, when weak and worn, with its vaunted remedy. The flesh—like some benevolent enchantress who would charm away His grief—held out to Him the enticing draught. And how strongly must the fume and odour exhaling from that spiced wine, with its magic potency, have appealed to flesh and blood at such a moment? Who could resist it? Yet He refused it utterly. Come to the fateful hour when He was to redeem the world from all sin and servitude, from the bondage of the senses, from all misuse of the gifts of God, from all self-indulgence and self-deception —how could He set free others if Himself half stupefied by fleshly gratification? It was not possible. He could not drink it.

So He went to the cross clear, calm, and self-possessed, in all His Divine dignity. And thus He gave the world a sign and an example. He proclaims a law to all His followers while the world lasts: 'If any man

will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.' Tempted though you may be, sorely and constantly, to soothe your griefs, to lull your pains, and to cheer your drooping spirits, by taking advantage of that intoxicating cup which a ready world will often press upon you, and the craving flesh will urge you to accept, remember (He seems to say) how I, your fellow-man, in the midst of My bitter agony kept steadfast for your sake, and walked that way of sorrows with steady foot and unclouded soul. 'They gave Me wine, and I received it not.'

But if My resolved followers, 'ye shall indeed drink of the Cup that I drank of' (St. Mark x. 39); in your measure and capacity ye shall taste of My wormwood and My gall (Lam. iii. 19), the tonic of the Divine pharmacy, which shall prove no 'cup of trembling' nor enervating 'potion bland,' but increase of strength.

> 'It comes of Thee that man doth cry, "I thirst":
> Then from no other hand but Thine I durst
> The cup of Life receive; for Thou dost know
> The way I came by and the way I go;
> Then give me wisdom Thine own cup to choose,
> And, like my Lord, the alien draught refuse.'*

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* Bishop Boyd Carpenter. The malefactor's drink referred to on page 22, and called 'St. Giles's cup,' was a large bowl of ale presented to the criminal at the Hospital of St. Giles on the road to execution at Tyburn. In ancient Paris it was the custom to give two cups of wine to the condemned in the Rue Saint-Denis before he was led to the gibbet of Montfaucon (Cheruel, 'Dictionnaire des Institutions,' ii. 1260).

III

Beast and Angel

'He was with the wild beasts, and the angels ministered unto Him.'—St. Mark i. 13.

The account of our Lord's Temptation as given by St. Mark, though much more brief and summary than that of the other Evangelists, has one interesting detail which they have omitted. He gives us here a suggestive intimation which we look for in vain in their fuller narratives, that when the Saviour was in the wilderness, withdrawn from the society of man, He was yet not altogether alone. 'He was with the wild beasts.' It is implied that those animals, *ferœ naturæ*, which are savage and destructive to others, were not so to Him. The wild creatures are introduced into the picture, not so much as a graphic touch to enhance the effect of its desolation and solitude, as to turn our thoughts back to the primeval state of man before his Fall, when he walked fearless and undismayed among all the beasts of the field, because God had given him dominion over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. 'The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the field.' Now that the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, is being tried and tempted anew in

regaining Paradise for us, He also in His own case recovers this lost prerogative of our first father, lordship over the animal world. As it was with Adam before he sinned, Jesus 'was with the wild beasts.' They owned Him as their rightful Lord, and played harmlessly around Him.

We find here, therefore, the 'Son of Man,' man as God meant him to be, the ideal man of the Psalms, standing in suggestive environment—between the savage animals on the one hand, and the holy angels on the other, freely recognised and served by both—'with the wild beasts,' and at the same time 'ministered unto by angels.' It is to be noticed that this same strange and remarkable association of man with the higher and lower orders of beings had already appeared in the Psalms. The same Psalm (xci.) which promises, 'He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways,' goes on immediately to add, 'Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent shalt thou trample under feet' (verses 11-13). And very similarly in Psalm viii.: 'Thou hast made him [but] a little lower than the angels' is followed by 'Thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field' (verses 5-7).

Thus, what in a special manner proved true of the Incarnate Son of Man is in a measure and in a certain sense true of every son of man in his degree. We *all* stand between the wild beasts and the holy angels.

Man and the beast, we are told, had a common origin, made alike in their corporeal frame out of the dust of the earth. But man had also a special creation in resemblance of God and His angels. 'Let us make

man in Our image, after Our likeness.' It is doubtless true, as the materialists are never tired of reminding us, that on our bodily side we are akin to the monkey and the lemur. In our structure, in our fleshly appetites, functions, and passions, in our infirmities, diseases, and liability to death, we have to range ourselves with the brute creation. As Byron coarsely puts it:

> 'Thou! formed to eat, and be despised and die,
> Even as the beasts that perish, save that thou
> Hadst a more splendid trough and wider sty.'*

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding, in our rational and spiritual nature, in our mental endowments, in our innate nobility, soaring aspirations, and infinite capacities for good, we may proudly claim to be 'little lower than the angels'—not so much in the way of actual and present attainment, as in growing and progressive potentialities. 'Man, as originally created, was made at the midway point between the angel and the brute, a little lower than the one, a little higher than the other. He was made, moreover, not perfect, but capable of perfection; not immortal, but capable of immortality.'† What a strange combination in this little world of man! What a meeting of extremes—half angel and half brute!

> 'We who do our lineage high
> Draw from beyond the starry sky,
> Are yet upon the other side
> To earth and to its dust allied.'‡

'There are six particulars respecting man,' says the 'Talmud,' 'three of which he shares with the minister-

* 'Childe Harold,' IV. xxxviii.
† J. B. Heard, 'Tripartite Nature of Man,' p. 86.
‡ Trench, 'Poems,' p. 56.

ing angels, and the other three he has in common with brutes.' He possesses knowledge, walks erect, and speaks the sacred language like ministering angels; he eats and drinks, procreates, and has digestive functions like brutes.'*

That man, by being sensual, cruel, and cunning, becomes 'inhuman,' departing from the human ideal, and thus really approximates to the wild beasts, is testified by the language of Scripture. False prophets are said to be inwardly 'ravening wolves.' 'Beware of dogs,' says St. Paul. 'Go tell that fox,' says our Lord. The treacherous and cunning are spoken of as 'an offspring of vipers,' as 'a lion in secret places.' Wild beast is the name given in the Revelation (xiii. 18, xvii. 11) to the Emperor Nero, and Renan in his 'Antichrist' has shown how well that inhuman monster deserved the title. While, on the other hand, those who excel in goodness and virtue are said to be angelic, as one said to David, 'My lord the king is as an angel of God.'

A title frequently given to the angels is 'the sons of God.' Then, they must be our brothers, because men, too, are 'sons of God.' We have the one Father and the one Home. When St. Luke is tracing up the human pedigree of our Lord, he mounts up the ladder patiently, name after name, till he arrives at Seth. Then he steps off and makes a wonderful leap—a leap from earth to heaven. 'Seth was the son of Adam, and Adam was—the son of God!' And this being so, since we are all children of Adam, we must be all children

* 'Chagigah,' 16; Hershon, 'Genesis with Talmudical Commentary.'

of God. There is a Divine element in our nature as well as a lower earthly element, a capacity of life and holiness and heaven as well as a liability to sin and death.

Have we not here the secret of that double or divided nature of which every man is conscious in himself, and an explanation of the fact that even in the worst of men something good may be found, and even in the best something bad? There is a strain of the bestial mingled with the angelic. 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that we [our proper selves, standing, as it were, in the midst and torn in different directions] cannot do the things that we would.' The angelic will not let us sink utterly to the brutal, nor the brutal let us soar altogether with the angelic. And so we are in a strait betwixt two. But these elements preponderate differently in different men.

> 'Some, like beasts, their senses' pleasure take;
> And some, like angels, doe contemplate still.
> Therefore the fables turned some men to flowres,
> And others did with bruitish formes inuest;
> And did of others make celestiall powers,
> Like angels, which still trauell, yet still rest.'*

That which is good in us we derive from our true Father, the Source of our being, and we have it in common with the angels. That which is base in us we inherit by descent from fallen earthly parents who sided with the serpent, and we share with the lower animals. The angel and the beast don't work happily in the one yoke.

It is interesting to notice how frequently this painful

* Sir J. Davies, 'Nosce Teipsum,' 1599.

antithesis of our being was commented on even in heathen writers. The most eminent of Greek philosophers remarks that there is in man a beastly element (θηριότης), but along with, it and opposed to it, something heroic and godlike, insomuch that he appears to be rather the son of a deity than of a mortal man (Aristotle, 'Ethics,' vii. 1). Not otherwise runs the judgment of the Roman Sallust: 'All our ability lies either in the soul or in the body; but we use the sovereignty of the soul rather than the service of the body; for the one we share in common with the gods, the other with the beasts.' And even more strikingly parallel are these verses of a Moslem poet:

'Thou partakest of the nature of the beast as well as the angel;
Leave the nature of the beast, that thou mayest surpass the angel.'*

Never, however, should it be forgotten that, though the worse may prevail and get the upper hand, man, however fallen and degraded he may be, is never *wholly* a brute, never *wholly* alienated from good angels. The Prodigal did not lose his proper nature nor his standing as a son, much less his father's love and pity, because he wandered away into a far country. He did indeed forfeit and forego the privileges and blessings which belonged to him under his father's roof. He felt homeless and home-sick, sunk below the level of a hired servant. But he was conscious all through that he was a son, and not a brute. He could not lie down contentedly to wallow and feed with the swine that he

* Jellaluddin Rumi, in Syed Ameer Ali, 'Mohammed: his Life and Teaching,' p. 281.

tended. He remembered his kinship in his father's house. It still had an open door for the humble returning penitent. The best robe and the gold ring, music and singing and dancing, were waiting for him; for always there is joy amongst the angels of God over one sinner—their wayward brother—when he comes home.

God, still our Father, however sinful and rebellious we may have been, is ever seeking us, and ready to welcome us back into His family. For He can see the angelic possibilities in us, underneath all that is animal and brutal in us. And this, unhappily, is just what men themselves often refuse to see and believe. They readily recognise the sensuous facts of life. They give undue weight to the cravings, desires, appetites, which they feel strongly, clamouring to be gratified. 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' But they forget the other side—that God is their Father, that He has made them for Himself, that He has put eternity into their hearts (Eccles. iii. 11), and that their hearts can find no rest until they rest in Him. They lose sight of the spiritual facts of their existence, their kinship with the angels. 'These as natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed speak evil of the things they understand not. But what they know naturally as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves,' as say the Apostles (2 Pet. ii. 12; Jude 10). It was the sensualist Solomon who depreciated his kind: 'They have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast.' It was Jesus, Who knew what was in man for good and for evil, that said, 'Are not ye much better than they?'

It may be true that only by a slow development and evolution man passed out of the highest rank of animals into the lowest rank of humanity. It may be that sin is in some particulars a relic of heredity, an undestroyed residuum of his old animal stage—still, a spark of the Divine is glowing in him, the breath of God is stirring in him; his progress is ever upwards towards the angels. Such was the high and assured outlook of our great poet in his calm maturity:

'If my body come from brutes, tho' somewhat finer than their own,
I am heir, and this my kingdom. Shall the royal voice be mute?
No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag me from the throne,
Hold the sceptre, Human Soul, and rule thy province of the brute.

'I have climb'd to the snows of Age, and I gaze at a field in the Past,
Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a low desire;
But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the Man is quiet at last,
As he stands on the heights of his life with a glimpse of a height that is higher.'

TENNYSON: *By an Evolutionist.*

Contrast with this the low and ignoble views of the materialist Zola in the book which he has entitled 'The Human Beast.' He throws a lurid light on the murder and lust which lurk in the depths of his human beast, and tries to make us believe that these two brutal factors are persistent in humanity. We might confute him out of the mouth of a much greater Frenchman. 'It is dangerous,' says Pascal, 'to show man how much he resembleth the beasts without at the same time pointing out to him his greatness. It is also dangerous to show him his greatness without pointing out his baseness. It is more dangerous still to leave him in

ignorance of both. But it is greatly for his advantage to have both set before him.' Our own Lord Verulam had already said: 'Certainly man is of kinne to the beasts by his body; and if he be not of kinne to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature.'*

The angel in man, no doubt, is sadly undeveloped when some cannot detect it at all. The fact is, when men walk after the flesh, and not after the spirit, having once set out on that path, they become less and less spiritual, more and more carnal and sensuous in their aims and desires, earthly, sensual, and at last even devilish. So immense is the gulf between the animal man and the spiritual. Whereas if they did but remember their Divine sonship, and reflect that man does not live by bread alone, still less upon such husks and draff as may satisfy unclean brutes like swine, they would bethink themselves of their true home, where angels are waiting to minister unto them.

In the world wilderness we all know too well this divided allegiance between competing masters. We are in a painful strait between two—the lower animal nature and the higher spiritual, the wild beasts and the angels. The important consideration is, Towards which of these are we being drawn and becoming assimilated as time goes on?

Plato asks, 'Is not the noble that which subjects the beast to the man, or rather to the god in man; and the ignoble that which subjects the man to the beast?'†

It matters little at what low point of organized

* Bacon's 'Essays': 'Of Atheism.'
† 'De Republica,' ix.

creatures our race began; but it is of vital consequence whether in the great spiritual evolution we are ascending now, and tending upwards from the low to the higher; or whether we are voluntarily degenerating, and growing downwards and backwards again into the mere animal out of which we sprang, and are becoming like the beasts, beastly.

'The strain of man's bred out
Into baboon and monkey.'
Timon of Athens, i. i. 260.

'O that we should with joy, pleasance, revel and applause, transform ourselves into beasts!'—*Othello*, ii. iii. 294.

When some are disparaging our descent and throwing doubts on our pedigree, suggesting that man is nothing better than a superior animal of the upper class, let us, like a great modern statesman, assert our high prerogative, and proclaim, 'For me, I am on the side of the angels!' Let us not be of those decadents St. Peter speaks of, who turn back to their old corruptions, like dogs of filthy and depraved appetite, nor seek again the defilements from which they were once cleansed, like newly washed sows their wallowing in the mire. Rather would we claim for ourselves a higher standing in the noble words of Tennyson:

'Let him, the wiser man, who springs
Hereafter up from childhood, shape
His action like the greater ape,
But *I* was born to other things.'

'Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upwards, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.'

'Be ye not as the horse or as the mule,' says David,

'which have no understanding,* whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.' Rather as rational beings and as sons of God let us be led by the Spirit of God. So far as we are thus led we shall be helping to bring back that happy state of Paradise—the return of which is predicted—when the brutes once more shall recognise their superior in their lord and master, man, and 'the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,' and what is most angelic in man, 'a little child, shall lead them.' Childlike purity, innocence and faith can 'stop the mouth of lions,' as it did for the fearless prophet who, in his extremity, stood literally with wild beasts on his one hand and an angel on his other. 'My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths that they have not hurt me' (Dan. vii. 22). He who delivereth from death, and delivered St. Paul when 'he fought with beasts at Ephesus'—'He shall send from heaven and save me,' when 'my soul is among lions' (Ps. lvii. 3, 4). And in due time, if we faint not, we may hope to attain to the better resurrection, when the animal body being put off, and the spiritual body being put on, we shall be, according to the Saviour's promise, 'equal to the angels' (St. Matt., xxii. 30).

'Life's struggle having so far reached its term;
Thence shall I pass, approved,
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a god though in the germ.'†

* In modern Greek the horse is called *alogon*, 'the irrational creature,' a word applied formerly to any beast.

† Browning, 'Rabbi Ben Ezra,' xiii.

IV

The Twofold Knowledge of Christ

'Jesus answered, and said unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered him, Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art King of Israel.'—St. John i. 48, 49.

'Seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves.'—St. Mark xi. 13.

1. The Lord, at the beginning of His ministry, is drawing to Him, one by one, the men who are to become his Apostles. He had already gathered to his side St. John, the brothers Andrew and Peter, and their townsman Philip. This last, being drawn himself, straightway draws another. He finds out his friend, Nathanael, and tells him that the long-predicted Messiah at last has come. Nathanael, though a man of conspicuous faith and simplicity of character, is not altogether free from doubts and difficulties. He questions whether this can be really true; but he comes to see for himself. Jesus, as He approaches, reads his inmost character, and sums him up as being a true and guileless Israelite, and as such frank and open to conviction. He therefore proceeds at once to give such a plain proof of His Divine omniscient power as would dispel any lingering doubt he might yet entertain:

'Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.' To sit under one's own fig-tree was an old proverbial phrase in Israel for one being wholly at ease and in safety; but our Lord here seems to refer to some secret and definite circumstance of a special character which was known only to Himself and Nathanael. Shortly before the summons came to him, from the mouth of Philip, he had been sitting under a leafy shade, sequestered, as he thought, and unobserved by any eye. In that solitude some private transaction had taken place, of which we can only guess the nature, perhaps some inward struggle with a great temptation —an earnest cry for deliverance—perhaps some fervent prayer, or spiritual victory, or high resolve. Whatever it was, it was something of critical importance, and the Lord marks this out by His words, 'I saw thee under *the* fig-tree—*that* fig-tree—*you* know what I mean. Went not My spirit with thy spirit? Thou wast not alone. *I* was with thee then.' This revelation carried instant conviction to the heart of Nathanael. He felt that he was now standing before One in whose presence he had been standing before and all along, though he did not know it—One whose eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. And at once he breaks into a noble confession of implicit faith: 'Rabbi, *Thou* art the Son of God; *Thou* art King of Israel. For who but a *Divine* Being can search the heart and reins as *Thou* doest? Now am I sure that Thou knowest all things; by this I believe that Thou camest forth from God.' His thoughts run, in the words of the Psalmist, 'O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me; Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising;

Thou understandest my thoughts afar off: Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. . . . Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; the darkness and the light to Thee are both alike' (Ps. cxxxix.). The intimate knowledge which Jesus possessed of Nathanael and his secret occupation as he sat beneath that fig-tree convinced him that He was omniscient and omnipresent. And he does him willing homage as his King and his God.

2. I will now ask you to turn your thoughts to another passage, where our Lord is brought into a somewhat similar relation to a fig-tree, and yet in marked contrast. The passage I mean is St. Mark xi. 13, where we read that, 'seeing a fig-tree afar off, having leaves, He came, if haply He might find anything thereon: and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves.'

The obvious meaning of this is that at first, and for a time, the Lord could not see what was under the leaves of the fig-tree. It was too far away. He discerned the tree in the distance, but He could not perceive whether there was any fruit on it. His sight did not carry so far. He had to walk on, and come close to it, and examine its boughs, before He became aware that it was barren of figs. And then He was disappointed, for He was hungry.

He expected that it would be otherwise. You observe the contrast, which at first sight is puzzling and unaccountable. In the one case He could see from afar what a certain man was doing under a fig-tree. In

the other case He could not see from afar what the fig-tree bore, or did not bear, on its branches. Now, this brings us face to face with a great mystery—the two-fold nature of our Lord as being both Divine and human. He was at once perfect God and perfect man. As God there were no bounds to His knowledge and His power; as man He was limited in His knowledge and power. 'Christ,' says Hooker, 'is essentially present with all things, in that He is very God; but not present with all things, as man.'*

This requires a good deal of patient and deep, as well as reverent, thinking. But it is a problem which the Christian sooner or later has to meet and solve, when he is asked the question, 'What think ye of Christ?' There were some things Jesus could do, and other things He could not do (apparently), according as one or other of His two natures was predominantly engaged. The key to the mystery is supplied in that famous passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians (ii. 6-8), where he says that, when Jesus Christ in His Incarnation humbled Himself to become man, He *emptied* Himself, taking the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men; that is to say, He voluntarily divested Himself of some of those pre-existent attributes and prerogatives which He possessed as the Eternal Son. He laid aside His Divine glory and His Divine omnipresence, and even, it seems, as a general rule, His Divine omniscience and Divine omnipotence, though at any moment He could at His pleasure resume those attributes and call them into requisition. As He became very man, 'in all

* 'Ecclesiastical Polity,' book v., chap. lv.

things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren' (Heb. ii. 17), and thus He came under the power of temptation, 'in all points tried like as we are' (Heb. iv. 15). And thus He brought Himself under the natural limitations of humanity—the imperfections of human vision and human hearing and human knowledge, and the bodily infirmities of man. We know that as a child 'He grew in wisdom' as in stature (St. Luke ii. 52). He would not have been a perfect child if He had not a child's imperfect knowledge and experience. The Divine 'Word,' who came to speak the Father's mind authoritatively, at first stammered and lisped in the imperfect utterances of infancy. Because 'the Word became flesh,' with all its creaturely weaknesses, St. Jerome boldly declares: 'Many tremble with fear lest they should be driven to say that Christ is a creature; we proclaim that there is no danger in saying that Christ is a creature.'* As such, in the natural course of things, He could not see or hear things ten miles distant any more than you and I. On a dark night He would stumble at a stone in His path, like you or me, even though the angels were ready to bear Him up in their hands if He required them.

In the ordinary matters of everyday life Jesus walked like ourselves, by sight and not by faith, according to the seeming of things rather than their reality. To His eyes, as to ours, the moon seemed many times larger than the stars, and if He had expressed that opinion—

* 'Multi timore trepidant ne Christum esse creaturam dicere compellantur; nos proclamamus non esse periculum dicere esse creaturam.'—'Ep. ad Eph.,' c. ii., § 6.

not speaking as an astronomer—surely no one would be offended. His vision was not telescopic nor microscopic, but natural; not perpetually penetrating things through with the power of the X rays, but confined to the surface and outwardness of things. How many trivial matters of earthly life He thus 'condescended not to know,' as beneath the exercise of his supernatural power. While still at a distance from Bethany Jesus knew that His friend Lazarus had died (St. John xi. 11), and two days afterwards He called him back from the realms of death—those were clear manifestations of His Divine power—but between times he was humanly ignorant of a fact which any villager of Bethany could inform him of, the place of his burial (St. John xi. 34), just as His Divine power was not extended to the loosing of the knots of the dead man's grave clothes (v. 44). 'Where have ye laid him?' asked the Raiser of the Dead. 'How many loaves have ye?' inquired the Worker of Miracles.

In Him dwelt all the *fulness* of the Godhead, even when He had *emptied* Himself of His external glory. In the language of theology, the *kenosis* must never be understood so as to be inconsistent with the *pleroma*. 'The assumption of manhood,' says Bishop Westcott, 'did not limit His Divine Nature in any way in itself; it limited only its manifestation.' And the limitations of knowledge which He voluntarily assumed as a part of His humiliation by no means involved liability to *error*. If there was anything He was ignorant of, it was not because He *could* not, but because He *would* not, know it. As of His omniscience, so of His human life He could say: 'I lay it down of Myself. I have power

to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.' Through love He became limited, as through love He became mortal.*

There were many things in this way that the man Christ Jesus, *could not*, because He *would not*, do—all miracles of self-help, for instance:

> 'Oh self-restraint, passing all human thought,
> To have all power, and be as having none!'

So far did He 'empty Himself' of all the treasures and resources of Divine knowledge, that when He became man He chose to put away and exclude from the sphere of His new estate whole classes of subjects which before His Incarnation lay clear and manifest before Him. Hence the surprising statement about His future coming: 'Of that day, or that hour, knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father' (St. Mark xiii. 32). All questions of dates and chronology, which might be matter of human curiosity, did not come within the range of His chosen position as the Son of Man. They lay outside the horizon which was now narrowed by His coming down so low. Here He is one with His brethren. But St. Augustine remarks that when He added, 'The Father knoweth it,' He said this 'because in the Father the Son also knoweth it,'† because 'I and

* See Liddon, Bampton Lectures, 5th ed., p. 467 *et seq.*; Bishop Moorhouse, Hulsean Lecture, 1865, p. 110 *et seq.*; Westcott, 'Hebrews,' p. 426; J. Stephenson, 'Chief Truths of the Christian Faith,' p. 93 *et seq.*; *British and Foreign Review*, No. cxliii., p. 75.

† 'Homilies on New Testament,' xlvii.

the Father are one. Only so far, then, as the Son is apart from, and unequal to, the Father as touching His manhood was this hidden from Him.

We see, then, that in things *not essential to His Divine mission* He was subject to the limitations of humanity. 'If our Lord was perfect man,' said Bishop Harold Browne, 'it is quite clear that a human mind has a capacity for a certain amount of knowledge, but not for infinite knowledge. Our Lord's human mind, therefore, could have possessed only a certain amount of knowledge. The absence of knowledge is ignorance, therefore partial knowledge in any intelligent being implies also partial ignorance; and therefore, again, our Lord as man must have been partially ignorant'—* I would rather say *nescient*, not knowing. No doubt, in all things that pertain to human science and wisdom, He purposely possessed only the knowledge of His times. He did not know there was a vast new world in the West waiting for its Columbus. He did not anticipate the discoveries of Galileo and Newton, the electric telegraph, or other triumphs of human learning. *Because these things do not touch the spiritual life of man.* But in all things that pertain to Divine wisdom, to life and godliness, and can make wise unto salvation—in *these* He had *perfect knowledge.* Just as His servant St. Paul in his ministry 'determined not to know anything else save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified' (1 Cor. ii. 2)—for in Him 'all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden' (Col. ii. 3)—similarly we may believe, without irreverence, that our Lord was content to share the current opinions of His time in things not essential.

* 'The Pentateuch and the Elohistic Psalms,' p. 12.

He may have adopted the ordinary views of His countrymen about the authorship and authenticity of some of the books of the Old Testament, because correct knowledge on such matters is *not vital* to the soul's health. He may have accepted the current Jewish belief about Jonah's deliverance from the great fish as useful for instruction, it not being vital to the soul whether a man believes or disbelieves this; but the spiritual lesson typified and foreshadowed by Jonah's three days' burial and restoration—that, as being a spiritual truth, independent of the literal character of the narrative, He was infallibly sure of, and *there* He could not err. *There* He spoke with authority, and not as the scribes.

3. Reverting now for a moment to our two texts, we see how instructive they are. Jesus was misled by the attractive appearance of a leafy fig-tree, which promised fruit, when He was looking about for means to satisfy His human hunger. He was then only using the *eyes of man*, and they were deceived. But when He was engaged in the direct work of His kingdom, in making choice of fit persons as Apostles to found His Church, and was about to admit them to their high and important office, *then* He put forth His *Divine power of vision*, and read the heart and inner nature of one far away, out of sight, as he lay hid under the shadow of a fig-tree. As man, near-sighted—as God, all-seeing.

It is, of course, most difficult for us to apprehend how this twofold knowledge, this partial knowledge and complete knowledge, can exist side by side in the same Person. It is one of the deep things of God and an essential part of 'the mystery of His holy Incarna-

tion.' Still, a few analogies there are which may help us to apprehend it. We can conceive the case of a high-principled statesman, who possesses a full knowledge of certain coming events of peace or war, which might be of great pecuniary value to him in his private capacity, yet he refuses to use that knowledge, though it might serve to enrich him in operations on the Stock Exchange and money market. He puts it aside, and becomes as one that did not know; practically ignorant as a shareholder of what he knew well as a statesman. Or may we not find something approximately similar to this twofold relation in the powers and responsibilities of a State official as apart from those of the same man in his private position? If a Judge as a private individual, were to order a man to be hanged, even though he took him red-handed in the act, he would himself be held guilty of murder. He may have private knowledge of a criminal's guilt, and yet as Judge he does not know it, and he acts as if he did not. In the former case, the same sentence is given authoritatively from the bench of justice, and he is commended for doing his duty. And so our Lord had an official and mediatorial knowledge of eternity and the vast universe, which He exercised on certain solemn and memorable occasions; but for the most part He surrendered that exalted wisdom, and was content in His daily life only to know what any devout Jew might know who took God's word for his law and was led by His Spirit. We read of Levi as God's 'holy one,' that at a critical juncture, from a sense of a higher duty to his Maker's honour, he was content to forego the knowledge of his own parents and disclaim all connec-

tion with his own flesh and blood. As if he were actually ignorant of them, 'he knew not his own children' (Deut. xxxiii. 9; compare St. Matt. x. 37, xix. 29). The natural knowledge of human affection was superseded and held in abeyance by devotion to a higher and more absorbing ideal. So our Lord allowed the omniscience which was natural to Him to be circumscribed and, as it were, annulled by his love to man. When we give our whole mind to any one subject, whatever it may be (*totus in illo*), that concentration requires that every other irrelevant subject should be banished from our thoughts. The chess-player, for instance, becomes for the time being perfectly oblivious of all the literary, classical, or scientific knowledge which he holds in reserve. So St. Paul could say, '*One* thing I do: I know *nothing* but Christ crucified.' And so our Blessed Lord in the work of our salvation was so straitened till it was accomplished that all wisdom and learning and knowledge which had no direct bearing upon *that* He passed by and resigned as outside the work which was given Him to do.

We can only wonder at and adore, while we cannot understand, the amazing condescension of our Saviour in foregoing *that* which man ever esteems his highest and most valued possession, which he clings to, whatever else may be taken from him—his knowledge. He emptied Himself of all but love. 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich' (2 Cor. viii. 9). Surely, no small part of that poverty (we may well believe) consisted in the intellectual privation He endured when

He meekly laid by those 'treasures of knowledge' which had been His, when man and his world were not, and consented, painfully and slowly, to gather wisdom and experience through such narrow channels as man's imperfect senses. May we not add this to the other condescensions which (according to Origen) the Saviour once alleged?—'For those that are weak, *I* was weak; for those that hunger, *I* suffered hunger; for those that thirst, *I* suffered thirst;' and conceive Him saying also, 'for those that are ignorant, *I* became ignorant.' Was this what Isaiah meant when he said, 'Hear, ye deaf, and look, ye blind, that ye may see. Who is blind, but my Servant? or deaf, as my Messenger that I send? Who is blind as He that is made perfect [or surrendered], and blind as the Lord's Servant?' (Is. xlii. 18, 19).

V

The Conservation of the Soul

'One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth for ever.'—Eccles. i. 4.

'There is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.'—Eccles. i. 9, 10.

In this changing world, where all things seem to be in a constant state of flux and transition, there is more continuity than we sometimes think. However the surface-dwellers come and go, the groundwork of old Mother Earth abideth the same for ever. There is a law of circularity by which old past things come up again after a long revolution for a fresh term of life, and 'the wheel of nature' (St. Jas. iii. 6) as it turns round is ever presenting old friends with new faces. The raindrops which descend to-day are the same that came down last year—a hundred years ago—at the Deluge. Those drops which water the hills run down in little rills into the valleys, and so into the rivers which fall into the sea, and from the sea they are drawn up again by the heat of the sun to form the clouds, whence they descend again in rain to water the earth. And so the great world-machine revolves from age to age in perpetual motion. As Solomon here says,

'All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.'

Now, natural philosophers tell us with confidence that it is literally true that 'there is no new thing under the sun'—no new element, no fresh matter, on the earth to-day that was not in it at its creation, nor has any old thing been lost since then. We may think that we can destroy a thing, and we may indeed smash it to pieces, pound it to dust, burn it to ashes, and cast the ashes to the winds; but we have only disorganised and separated its component particles; we have not really annihilated one of them. Students of science assure us that by no process at the command of man can he either create matter or destroy it. The utmost he can do is to change its combinations. He burns a letter, for instance, and as far as the writing is concerned it may be said to be destroyed; but every particle of the paper and the ink still exists as gases in the atmosphere and as ashes in the earth. Matter is immortal.

One of the great discoveries of the last century was that this indestructibility is equally true of the forces of Nature and forms of energy, such as heat, motion, electricity, chemical action. These, too, man can neither create nor destroy. He can only change their manifestation or form and give them a new direction. He can convert motion into heat, or heat back again into motion, but he can destroy neither of them. This is called the Principle of the Conservation of Force, or the Law of the Persistence of Energy.

Let me illustrate this for a moment. Let us suppose that a blacksmith in the wantonness of his strength

batters his anvil with his powerful hammer till his brawny arms are tired: what becomes of all that force and energy expended? Is it utterly lost as well as wasted? No, it is all there in the anvil, but converted into another kind of force known as heat. The result of that hammering is that the iron of the anvil has become quite hot; the motion and impact have developed caloric. So, when a cannon-ball in its thunderous flight crashes into the target which arrests it, what becomes of its velocity? The energy of motion has disappeared, but a new energy, heat, has been set up in the target. And in the same way heat may be turned into velocity, as we see in the steam-engine, but it cannot be annihilated. From this indestructible persistence of energy follows the inevitable conclusion that the total quantity of it remains the same at all times, do what we may. Changed it may be from one form to another, but it is incapable of increase or diminution; there is no gain and no loss. To the world of Nature nothing can be added; from Nature nothing can be taken away; the sum of her energies is constant. The most man can do is to shift about the parts of the great total. Like a frugal and careful housewife, Nature, when any of her products are broken up for use, reiterates the command of her Master, 'Take up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.' And nothing is lost.

'The drop of dew
That trembles in the rosebud's breast
Will seek its home in ether blue,
And fall again, as pure and blest;
Perchance to revel in the spray,
Or moisten the dry parching sod,
Or mingle in the fountain's ray,
Or sparkle in the bow of God.'

Dryden has expressed it more philosophically:

> 'The chain still holds, for though the forms decay
> Eternal matter never wears away. . . .
> Forms, the mortal part, expire.
> As He withdraws His virtue, so they pass,
> And the same matter makes another mass:
> This law the Omniscient Power was pleased to give,
> That every kind should by succession live;
> That individuals die, His will ordains,
> The propagated species still remains.'*

Thus, in the physical world, the saying of Solomon holds good, that 'there is no new thing under the sun,' but only the old primeval basis of matter and force, as at first created, appearing in an endless variety of phenomena. God's fiat, 'Let it be,' was spoken once for all, and it goes on evolving for ever, under all its outward changes at bottom unchangeable. And thus the Law of Conservation of Energy excludes the idea of annihilation. We may make this vast conception easier to ourselves if we regard the world as one great hall with an infinite variety of furniture, which we may move about at our pleasure; but nothing new is ever introduced, nothing old is carried out. Or we may think of a carpenter with his tools put to work within the four walls of a room carefully shut up. He may cut about his timber into what variety of shapes and forms he pleases, but at the end of the day, taken all together, manufacture, shavings, chips, and sawdust, there is not a jot more there than there was at first, and nothing less.

How all this may have a bearing on our religious

* Dryden, 'Palamon and Arcite,' iii. 1030-1037. *Cf.* Bishop Thirlwall, 'Letters,' p. 17; 'Victoria Inst. Trans.,' xxxii. 35 *et seq.*

belief will appear immediately. But before we pass from the physical aspect of the fact of the Persistence of Force, let us glance for one moment at what is perhaps the most marvellous exemplification of it—the coal-fire which blazes on our hearths. For what is coal? Only the fossilised residuum of primeval vegetation, of forests which flourished and decayed in a far-remote past. Those antediluvian trees drank in the sunshine as chemical force through their countless leaves, locked it up for ages in their woody fibre; they sank in their slowly-growing swamp and became peat, which eventually turned into coal. But the sun force was still imprisoned in the black bonds of carboniferous material, and now, after a thousand centuries, it is liberated and leaps to life again when the coal is kindled on our hearth. It is one of the fairy tales of science, but unquestionably true. Every coal-field is a buried store of solar energy laid up for man's use, and it is in the sunbeams of prehistoric times that we warm ourselves at our firesides to-day. A veritable resurrection, surely! When that living force, which had lain torpid and interred for unknown millenniums, revives and lives again with its pristine potency. The paradox of George Stephenson thus comes literally true: the force which drives the locomotive is 'bottled sunshine.' And it might even be shown that every force, every conceivable work and activity which make up the busy world to-day, can be traced back to the same great reservoir of energy, the sun. 'The whole marvellous panorama of life that spreads over the surface of our globe is, in the last analysis, transformed sunlight' (Haeckel).

What light, if any, does this revelation of science cast on the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection? As to the future destiny of the body, it would seem to intimate that the mere corporeal elements, after its dissolution, will not be raised again in identically the *same* form, but in new combinations of beauty and usefulness. I remember a dear sister of my own writing, when lingering death was at last drawing nigh, 'I am longing to be away among the sweet flowers and the bees in the spring air.' She felt a calm pleasure in contemplating that natural resurrection for the poor elements of the worn-out body. And this is one reason why mindful affection loves to let flowers grow over the graves of its lost ones.

'Lay her i' the earth,
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
Let violets spring!'

It is a lovely metamorphosis for the discarded remains, for 'that which is finished and done with,' as the Assyrians named a corpse (*shalamtu*).

'Here in their simple graves
The generations of the hamlet sleep.
All grassy simple, save that here and there
Love-planted flow'rets deck the lowly sod.
Fond love, we scorn thee not: to bring the bud
Of living beauty from the ashes dear,
Be still thine artless emblematic war
Against the dull dishonours of the grave.
Bloom then, ye little flowers, and sweetly smell;
Draw up the heart's dust in your flushing hues
And odorous breath, and give it to the bee,
And give it to the air, circling to go
From life to life, through all that living flux
Of interchange, which makes this wondrous world.'*

* Thomas Aird.

But what is all this posthumous prettiness to me myself? How does it concern me if I,

> 'Who loved, who suffered countless ills,
> Who battled for the True, the Just,
> Be blown about the desert dust,
> Or sealed within the iron hills?'*

Well, the answer is that it is not matter only, as we have seen, that is practically indestructible in the universe, but living force and energy. And it cannot be denied that one of the great forces in the world—perhaps the greatest—is spiritual force, the power of the soul, the power of genius, the energy of love and goodness. Surely this, too, must be immortal. It would be a world of incredible topsy-turvydom, a strange and cruel mockery, if the base material parts of creation were all assured of continuance, and only the higher, nobler, spiritual parts were to be the exception—doomed to perish everlastingly and beyond recovery. Of course, for the Christian, who with humble trust accepts the Bible as God's Word, and therefore a decisive revelation, there is no room for doubt on this head; for it everywhere assumes or asserts the reality of a future life and the immortality of the soul. But even many Christian people are glad to have an independent confirmation of their hopes and beliefs, and they would like to know whether science and discovery have anything to say on this important subject.

> 'For truth can never be confirmed enough
> Though doubts did ever sleep.'

This Law of the Conservation of Energy is altogether in favour of the soul, that great spiritual force or

* 'In Memoriam,' lvi.

energy, continuing to exist after the body's dissolution. If those mere insensate forces of heat and motion cannot be annihilated, why should we assume that the living, conscious, godlike soul must be liable to destruction?

Haeckel, the great modern evangelist—or should we not rather say 'dysangelist'?—of bad tidings of great sadness, admits that we find psychic energy and psychic matter inseparably associated with the 'substance' of the soul, some even comparing it to physical 'ether'; but he experiences an insuperable difficulty in conceiving 'the uninterrupted continuance of our individual life for ever.' The immortality of the human soul he pronounces to be 'in hopeless contradiction to the truths of modern science.' Then, in the very next chapter of his 'Riddle of the Universe' (the 'Riddle' which, on his showing, has no answer), he proceeds with unconscious irony and inconsistency to expatiate on what he calls 'the greatest intellectual triumph of the nineteenth century,' namely, the discovery and establishment of 'the chemical law of the conservation of matter' and 'the physical law of the conservation of energy,' 'two great laws which are essentially inseparable.' These demonstrate that 'no particle of living energy is ever extinguished.' 'The sum total of force or energy,' he says, 'remains constant, no matter what changes take place around us; it is eternal and infinite, like the matter on which it is inseparably dependent.' And this view 'marks the highest intellectual progress, in that it definitely rules out the three central dogmas of metaphysics—God, freedom, and immortality.' *Some* faith, indeed, this downright materialist *has*. 'I believe,'

he says, that 'the existence of ether is as certain as that of ponderable matter, as certain as my own existence,' though it is invisible, imponderable, neither gaseous nor solid, has no chemical quality and is not composed of atoms, is boundless, immeasurable, and is in eternal motion. But his faith can go no further. An ethereal soul can have no existence; of *that* he is quite sure. 'The premature death of Spinoza, Raphael, Schubert, and many other great men, is one of those brutal facts of human history which are enough of themselves to destroy the untenable myth of "a wise Providence" and an "All-loving Father in heaven."'*

Consider, then, this picture for a moment. Just three hundred years ago, in a humble room in the south of London, a man in the prime of life was seated, pen in hand, in profound thought. He was engaged in writing, by the light of a tallow candle. The man was Shakepeare, and the manuscript on which he was engaged was 'Hamlet.' Now, here is the paradox. Science bids us believe it as infallibly true, that every element of that candle is still in existence on this earth somewhere, and that every particle of that paper on which he wrote is still floating about in some new combinations; and criticism proclaims that the work thus composed is immortal. But what of the *man himself*, the soaring intellect, the rare and sovereign soul which ranged from heaven to earth, and composed that work of genius? *It* is gone to nothing! Utterly vanished out of the universe! Less stable and permanent than his cheap surroundings! That would indeed be a bitter irony, if the taper and the paper were gifted with a continuity of

* Haeckel, 'The Riddle of the Universe,' chap. xii.

existence denied to the great-souled poet! Shall we believe that he was expressing his own inmost conviction and the very truth of things when he made one of his creations say:

> 'Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow;'*

and made another, when meditating murder, thus compare the frail life of humanity to a flickering lamp:

> 'Put out the light, and then—put out the light:
> If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
> I can again thy former light restore,
> Should I repent me; but once put out *thy* light,
> Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
> I know not where is that Promethean heat
> That can thy light relume?'†

Or shall we think that, believing far otherwise, he was altogether the victim of delusion and self-deception when he wrote these confident words in his last will and testament: 'I commend my soul into the hands of God, my Creator, hoping and assuredly believing, through the only merits of Jesus Christ, my Saviour, to be made partaker of life everlasting?' No, we cannot bring ourselves to believe that he was merely deceiving himself with an idle hope, and that his departing soul was really snuffed out more irretrievably than the poor taper that ministered to him. We may rather have an assured confidence that the soul of man when he dies is not the one sad exception to the great universal law, that no atom of living energy is ever annihilated. Indeed, we find that an ancient Jewish Rabbi has anticipated this very argument: 'No atom of matter in the

* 'Macbeth,' V. v. 24. † 'Othello,' V. ii. 7-13.

whole vastness of the universe is lost: how, then, can man's soul, which comprises the whole world in one idea, be lost?'* No, it is living somewhere with God, safe in His Almighty keeping.

'O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force,
Surely, has not been left vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar
In the sounding labour-house vast
Of being, is practised that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm!

'Yes, in some far-shining sphere,
Conscious or not of the past,
Still thou performest the word
Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live—
Prompt, unwearied, as here!'†

So wrote Matthew Arnold, and a writer not less sceptical, H. T. Buckle, it is interesting to note, approximated to the same great truth. Commenting on the fact that there is a spiritual and poetic element in the human mind which enables men like Goethe and Shakespeare to seize truth as it were by anticipation, he observes that in the question which the latter puts in the mouth of Hamlet, 'Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander?' down to this present hour and its ignoble uses, Shakespeare seized the great truth of the indestructibility of matter, which can only be metamorphosed, never destroyed. It is only the prosaic, narrow-minded Horatio who objects, ''Twere to consider too curiously to consider so.' To theorise, Buckle adds, is the highest function of genius, and recently it has given us the magnificent doctrine of the

* Rabbi Ishmael, in Polano, 'Talmud,' p. 213.
† Matthew Arnold, 'Poems,' 1890, p. 305.

indestructibility of force, so that we are beginning to perceive that our investigations must be confined to questions of metamorphosis and distribution. Then come these noticeable words: 'But, unless I greatly err, there is something in us *which craves for more than this.* Surely, we shall not always be satisfied, even in physical science, with the cheerless prospect of never reaching beyond the laws of co-existence and of sequence. Surely this is not the be-all and end-all of our knowledge?' ('Miscellaneous Works' i, 69, 71). What is this unacknowledged truth for which he craved but the conservation of the soul also unto everlasting life? Gone hence it is somewhere, waiting to be recalled.

And all that is essential to the continuity of its resurrection body is also ready to be recalled. As the early Christian writer Tatian once expressed it: 'Even though fires destroy all traces of my flesh, the world receives the vaporised matter, and though dispersed through rivers and seas, or torn in pieces by wild beasts, I am laid up in the store-houses of a wealthy Lord . . . who, when He pleases, will restore the substance, that is visible to Him alone, to its pristine condition.'* From that dormitory we may yet issue, awake, and fully conscious that our personality and individual force have survived and been preserved. Although, as Robert Browning says,

> 'The soul retreated from the perished brain,
> Where it was wont to feel and use the world
> Through these dull members done with long ago,
> Yet I myself remain; I feel myself,
> And there is nothing lost.'

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* Tatian, 'Address to the Greeks,' chap. vi.

Thus it was with our Lord after His experience of death. Risen again, in full possession of His former self, He was able to say to His doubting and scared disciples, 'Why are ye troubled? And why do thoughts arise in your hearts? It is I Myself. A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have' (St. Luke xxiv. 38, 39).

'Win truth, win goodness—for which man was made,
And fear not thou of these to be bereft;
Fear not that these shall in the dust be laid,
Or in corruption left,
Or be the grave-worm's food.
Nothing is left or lost, nothing of good
Or lovely; but whatever its first springs
Has drawn from God, returns to Him again.'*

* Trench, 'Poems,' p. 101.

VI

Christ drawing All Men

'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me.'—St. John xii. 32.

This great saying of our Lord has hardly received the attention which its immense importance deserves. He says that when He is lifted up from the earth, evidently meaning upon the cross, a certain magnificent result will follow: He will draw *all* men unto Him, not some good men here and there in some favoured nations, but '*all* men.'

It was to some proselytes from among the heathen Greeks who had sought Him out that our Lord uttered this prediction. Their approach suggested the coming time when all those other flocks which He had scattered throughout the world should eventually be gathered into one fold, and from the rising up of the sun unto the going down of the same His name should be great among the Gentiles. He sees in these few Greek inquirers the van-couriers of a mighty host coming on behind, who were already setting their faces towards the Holy City. Their arrival was the earnest and prelude of His predestined glory. It has already begun. 'Now is the Son of Man glorified.' This handful of

foreigners, who, evidently not content with their old heathen beliefs, desired to see Jesus, and to learn of Him, were the first tokens of a great uprising against the yoke of the old tyrant of the world. So the Saviour exclaims with manifest exultation, 'Now is the crisis of this world! Now shall the prince of this world be cast out!' For hitherto 'the whole world lieth in [the power of] the Wicked One' (1 St. John v. 19), but it shall lie so no more. His power is being broken, and his subjects, when set free, shall acknowledge Me as their lawful King. For He immediately adds, 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, shall draw all men unto Myself.' In the sublime and assured confidence of His final victory He sees that the future is His. In being lifted up on that painful elevation of the cross He ascends the throne of universal sovereignty. Beyond the gathering darkness of the Crucifixion He discerns, breaking over the distant horizon, the golden dawn of a new and better day which shall be to all people. He looks away over the clouded, barren earth and sees the grain of wheat which He is sowing become a harvest waving wide over the world in peaceful sunshine. He was lifted up on high that He might be the better seen, and men might look on Him whom they had pierced. From that elevation He commands first the attention, and then the homage, of a gazing world, set 'as an ensign of the people: unto Him shall the nations seek, and His rest shall be glorious' (Is. xi. 10). For 'He shall draw *all* men unto Him.'

We know, indeed, that no man has ever lived for whom the Lord did not die. 'He redeemed me and all mankind.' When He suffered death upon the cross,

'He made there, by His one oblation of Himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.' In these noble words our liturgy delights in heaping up, as it were, the largest and most generous epithets it can find to express the freeness and fulness of His salvation. But the words of the text evidently assert something more than the universal efficacy of the Lord's sacrifice—that every man may potentially be saved if he will. They assert far more—that it will be successful in obtaining such result, that every man will be drawn effectually, some time or other, it does not say *when*, to the Saviour. 'I will draw *all men* to Myself.' It is strange how often these words have been overlooked, and how often they have been emptied of their meaning. Most commentaries, I find, either say nothing at all about that word 'all,' or, if they do notice it, it is only to imply that it says too much, what is too good to be true. They generally suggest that when our Lord said 'all' He somehow meant only 'some.' So they set themselves to limit and restrict this gracious promise as being too wide, too generous. They strive to demonstrate that it can mean only the elect, or only baptized Christians, or only the Church, or only the good people, or only the Gentiles. But it is difficult to see why expounders should be so anxious to explain away that grand and glorious prediction of our loving Redeemer, who is 'loving to every man,' and far more loving than any man, when in the fulness of His mercy He said that by His atoning death He would draw *all* men unto Himself.

I confess that I would myself feel considerable diffi-

culty in accepting the words in their world-wide comprehensiveness, which leaves not one out anywhere, did I not find that one of the most thoughtful and learned of our modern theologians, the late Bishop Westcott of Durham, authorises us to take them so. Commenting on the use of the word 'all' here, he says. 'The phrase must not be limited in any way. It cannot mean merely "Gentiles as well as Jews," or "the elect," or "all who believe." We must receive it as it stands.' And he corroborates this, the natural interpretation, by reference to such texts as, 'God our Saviour will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth . . . . who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due season' (1 Tim. ii. 4-6). And again, 'As by the offence of one judgment came upon *all* men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of One, the free gift came upon *all* men unto justification of life' (Rom. v. 18). We must not, therefore, narrow down the saying so as to square and fit with our own straitened systems or puny conceptions of what Christ can do or should do, but rather accept the inestimable benefit in all its boundless extension. We know, indeed, that the Lord Jesus, by the beauty of His holy life and character, by His touching death as the world's martyr, does draw the admiration of all men worthy of the name. The Magnet of the World, He does exercise an attractive power on even hearts of iron. Sceptics like Renan struggle to resist His influence, but in spite of themselves are conscious of being drawn insensibly towards Him by the fine and subtle threads of a mysterious potency, till they are all but prostrate at His feet. But this consideration does not exhaust the

meaning of the text. The Lord manifestly means more than that He will attract men and constrain their reluctant homage and admiration. He will draw them *unto Himself*, right up to Him where He is, until they become His, until they touch Him heart to heart, and in some way the object of His dying is attained, and they are effectually redeemed and saved.

We know as a matter of fact that in this world a large number of even professing Christians are very far indeed from being drawn to any saving purpose close up to Jesus in faith, holiness, and love. They are still infinitely remote from Him, and apparently quite outside the sphere of His controlling influence. We know that even in our own country there are hundreds of thousands who do not even profess to be Christians or to belong to Christ in any shape or form, who refuse to be drawn even to the small extent of outward conformity in bearing His name and accepting His word. Then outside this mere patch of half-illuminated territory is lying the great dark world of heathenism, of men who, never having heard the name of Christ, have had no chance of being brought to Him.

This being so, what could the prophet mean by saying that the Saviour of the World shall yet 'see of the travail of His soul and *shall be satisfied*'? Would He be satisfied in any true sense if He had *half* mankind, and the devil the other half? Or if He had only *one* out of every ten of immortal souls, would He make no anxious inquiry, 'Where are the nine?' Would He be satisfied if He could only reclaim *one* lost sheep for the fold while ninety-and-nine were left perishing out in

the wilderness? Or, putting the same question another way, would He be satisfied if He could only say, 'I will draw all but *a very few*,' or even, 'I will draw all but *one*'? I cannot think that the Lover of Souls would be satisfied if that poor solitary unit, a son of perdition, was left undrawn—one black spot of misery in a bright universe of holy sunshine. 'But what sort of earthly government would that be where more than half the subjects were in prison? I cannot believe that the government of God will [for ever] be like that' (Dr. Guthrie).

And, happily, this text does not by any means stand alone in its gracious universality; though, coming direct from the Redeemer's lips, it is of paramount importance, and must overrule all partial and less authoritative views of His Redemption. There are other passages scarcely less wide in their sweeping significance. God has ordained that 'at the name of Jesus *every* knee should bow, of those in heaven, and those in earth, and those under the earth [an exhaustive definition of the universe], and that *every* tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Phil. ii. 10, 11). 'He is the propitiation for our sins, and *not for ours* [Christians] *only*, but also for the sins of *the whole world*' (1 St. John ii. 2). 'He is the Saviour of *all men*, especially of those who believe' (1 Tim. iv. 10). 'As in Adam *all* die, even so in Christ shall *all* be made alive' (1 Cor. xv. 22)—the two are co-extensive. And so, again, we read of the purpose or good pleasure of God 'to sum up all things in Christ; through Him to reconcile all things to Himself' (Col. i. 20), 'in the fulness of times to gather together in one *all*

things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in Him' (Eph. i. 10).

Therefore the Son Himself, knowing this purpose of His Father, from His uplifted Cross looks onward to the time when 'the *fulness* of the Gentiles' shall have been brought into His kingdom, and '*all* Israel shall be saved,' when God, having convicted all men of unbelief, shall 'have mercy upon *all*' (Rom. xi. 32). He looks forward, above the mists of error and prejudice which lie close along the earth, beyond the clouds and darkness of the coming æons, and descries that

> 'one far-off Divine event
> To which the whole creation moves,'

'the restoration of all things,' the final and complete victory of good over evil, when all enemies shall be put under His feet, and the last enemy shall be destroyed, and, all things being made subject to Him, God shall be all in all. Then all the lingering discords of earth shall be resolved at last into the long-delayed final harmony of a regenerated universe, the Hallelujah Chorus of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, saying: 'Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto God for ever and ever. Amen' (Rev. vii. 12). Not one jarring note shall

> 'Break the fair music that all creatures make
> To their great Lord, whose love their motion sways
> In perfect diapason.'

It is, therefore, with no mere vain wish and idle aspiration, but with a good hope and warrant, that we venture to put up that most catholic petition of

our most catholic Litany, 'That it may please Thee to have mercy upon *all men*.'

But here comes a question to give us pause: What are we to do with all those passages of Scripture which speak of condemnation and hell; of the unbelieving, the lost, the reprobate, who are to be punished hereafter by banishment from His presence and age-long punishment? The only way out of the difficulty appears to be the conclusion that these dreadful punishments are to be remedial, means to an end, and not final and for ever. It is good for the wicked that they should be punished, and verily they *shall* be punished—punished in very faithfulness by a God who is a Consuming Fire, some with many stripes, some with fewer. But far away and beyond there is the hope of restoration. Even in the place of punishment God's mercy is dealing with them, Christ's love constraining them, teaching them, showing them things that they never understood before, and so drawing them up with cords, perhaps necessarily rough, galling, burning, yet cords of love. We have to believe that by degrees that love against which they had steeled their hearts in their earthly life, which perhaps they never even heard of, shall be revealed to them. It will awaken that slumbering spark of divinity and goodness which is in *every* man, till it makes some slow response. It will begin to exercise its attractive saving power on even the hardest hearts, till they grow softened and changed, and thus they are effectually drawn nearer and nearer till they come face to face with their Saviour Christ. Only then shall they come to know Him. There fall from their eyes as it were scales. The God whom they had fought

against and hated they discover to be a monster of their own imagining, and not the real, loving, tender-hearted Father who yearned for His children. They could not but have loved Him before if they had seen Him; but they had not seen Him. These things they did 'because they did not know the Father nor Me' (St. John xvi. 3).

What has been advanced may be summed up in the form of a question, to which there can be, I conceive, but one answer: 'Is it possible that any creature can finally resist the love of God if he comes to know it and feel it?'

But many will ask, 'Is not this a dangerous doctrine?' It cannot be dangerous if it is Christ's, and therefore true. 'But will it not encourage the careless and wicked in their wickedness if they have a hope extended to them of being saved at last and brought home to Christ in the revolving ages of eternity?' I think not. They shall bear their punishment. They shall be made to learn by a bitter, bitter experience what they would not learn, and open their hearts freely to believe, in this day of grace. And who can tell the long ages of pain, and sorrow, and misery they may have to pass through before they completely learn the lesson which they were so slow and reluctant to learn when they were put to school *here?* Sin here will surely bring retribution hereafter. It is hateful to God, and must be got rid of, and therefore He has provided for it in the world to come wrath and judgment and cleansing fires.

On the contrary, this doctrine of final hope appeals to all that is best and noblest in the heart of man. It is very far from countenancing or upholding the evil-

doer, as if his wickedness made no great difference after all, seeing that everything will come right in the end. Let us illustrate this by the help of the parable of the Prodigal, who, impelled by a roving disposition, forsook his father's house and went his own way. He knew that however far he wandered, and however much he misconducted himself, he would still always be his father's son, would always have a kind parent to turn to, and a comfortable home to which he might come back. Suppose, then, that, relying on this, he calculated that he would fare no worse then than if he had abidden continually in his father's house. He therefore wilfully abandoned his birthright and filial standing. He went away to some far-off country, and there wasted his goods in riotous living, until he became bankrupt and starving, outcast and miserable, a mess-mate with the swine. After all this, when thus reduced, he came home at last, sad at heart, a poor, beaten, broken wreck of humanity. Nevertheless, he found his father's hospitable doors open for him, and his father himself waiting with loving arms extended to receive him.

Now, will anyone tell me that, this being so, he was nothing the worse for what he had gone through, and that there was no difference between him and his elder brother, the good son, who always stayed with his father in dutiful obedience? Not only was it a base and mean thing for him to go away in the first instance, if it was the result of a calculation that he might come home any day when he was ruined and forlorn, and then be no penny the worse. Not only did he suffer dire hardships during those years of his self-chosen exile, sore hunger, degradation, and remorse, but even when

he got home and was reinstated in his old privileges, do you think he entered his father's doors with the old free and frank bearing of a son, with head erect and beaming countenance? No; he slunk in, I suspect, with a hang-dog air, with downcast eyes, and hollow jaws, and tottering steps, ashamed to meet even the eyes of the hired servants in his ragged poverty. And even when he was so graciously welcomed, and the best robe was provided for him, and the gold ring put on his finger, do you not think he must have felt full of shame and self-reproach? Did he join at once with a merry heart in the music and the dancing? I trow not. His father, indeed, had forgiven him fully and freely, but he could not so easily forgive himself. He could not forget that he was the returned prodigal who had sinned against heaven and his father, and was no more worthy to be called his son. Do you not think that for many a day he went softly in his self-upbraiding remorse that he had been so unkind and so undutiful? For many a day he would bear the emaciated frame, the depressed air, the pain at the heart, even though he *was* in the old home. Perhaps the time might come when he would be as if he had never fallen; but would it not have been infinitely better for him if he had never gained that sad experience, and had never to be drawn back from such a distance? Both the sons—*i.e.*, *all* the sons—were gathered at last under the one roof of the same loving father, but one moved about it all the days of his life a punished man who carried within him sad memories of rebellion, famine, and disgrace.

No, assuredly there is no encouragement here to wilful sin on the ground of ultimate restoration. The

Prodigal Son is never again quite the same as his home-keeping brother. Hell has been in his heart, though heaven is now his long and final home. He has passed through the fires. He has been 'lost' and 'dead,' though now he is 'found' and 'alive.' Others may feel pure joy at his return, and he shares in the rejoicing; but he bears lasting scars upon his soul, scars of old wounds now healed, and painful reminders of long-since-committed sins.

Consequently, our Lord abates nothing of His righteous judgment and hatred of sin when He proclaims, 'I, if I be lifted up, will draw *all* men unto Me.' The 'drawing' of the Prodigal was by means of want and suffering, through bitter experiences, and over many a long and weary league. And the 'drawing' of many men has to be through fire and painful punishment. Still, beyond there is the light of hope. 'The good news of great joy' is for '*all* people.' At some time or other, however far remote, the love of Christ will constrain the hearts of all sinners and draw them to Himself, even as the great central sun controls and draws to him the furthest wandering of the planets. As Lowell beautifully says:

'One band ye cannot break—the force that clips
And grasps your circles to the central light;
Yours is the prodigal comet's long ellipse,
Self-exiled to the farthest verge of night;
Yet strives with you no less that inward might
No sin hath e'er imbruted;
The god in you the creed-dimmed eye eludes;
The Law brooks not to have its solitudes
By bigot feet polluted;
Yet they who watch your God-compelled return
May see your happy perihelion burn
Where the calm sun his unfledged planets broods.'

But you, reader, be wise. Let yourself be drawn *now*. *To-day*, if you hear His voice, harden not your heart. 'O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake Thee shall be ashamed. . . . Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved' (Jer. xiv. 13, 14). 'Draw me; we will run after Thee' (Cant. i. 4).

VII

Holy Pots

'In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holy unto the Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holy unto the Lord of Hosts.'—ZECH. xiv. 20, 21.

WHATEVER else may be said of our sermons nowadays, it must be admitted, I think, that they are more plain-spoken than those of our fathers, and preached more in the language of common life. Fifty years ago a certain conventional propriety of language was held to be essential in the pulpit. It avoided the commonplace by ingenious circumlocutions. Few preachers then could be induced to take Ben Jonson's advice:

> 'Ramp up thy genius . . .
> And boldly nominate a spade a spade.'*

If he could possibly bring himself to refer to a pot —as the prophet does here—it would be in some elegant and apologetic periphrase, delivered with the *ore rotundo* of pomposity, 'that useful but humble utensil well known in our culinary operations,' or something similar. Now we have gained courage to be more direct. We boldly recognise that even in the elevation

* 'The Poetaster' (1601), v. 1.

of the pulpit a pot may be called a pot without offence, notwithstanding its grimy associations—and that is something. It is said that when Bishop Samuel Wilberforce once preached on the text 'There is death in the pot,' the repetition at intervals through his sounding discourse of that homely English monosyllable 'pot,' was from its incongruity a considerable trial to the composure of his audience, though the speaker was himself quite unconscious of it.*

If a preacher were to choose these verses for the text of his discourse, time was, I dare say, when he would have been taxed with affectation and eccentricity. And yet, if its meaning be unfolded, I think it might be shown to be a passage full of very practical and excellent instruction for us Christians in our every-day lives. The twentieth verse says that on some day yet to come there shall be upon the bells of the horses 'Holiness unto the Lord,' and that the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Now, what does this mean? Hitherto those words 'Holiness unto the Lord' had been inscribed on only *one* place, and that the most sacred. It was engraved on gold, and set on the front of the High Priest's mitre, which he wore in the discharge of his office on the most solemn occasions. But henceforth it will be different. A day is coming, says the prophet, the day of the Messiah, when every horse that traverses the streets shall bear the same inscription on its harness. That unique symbol of sanctity, hitherto worn by none but the highest minister of the sanctuary, shall then be worn commonly and every-

* *Church Quarterly Review*, x. 247.

where. The sharp distinction once observed between things holy and profane shall be done away—not by profanation of the sacred, but by sanctification of the secular. When in place of Zion the whole mountain round about shall be 'the sanctuary and the most holy place' (Ezek. xlv. 3); when every one that is left in Zion and remaineth in Jerusalem shall be called holy (Is. iv. 3); yea, when 'neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem,' shall men worship the Father (St. John iv. 21), but everywhere, for 'from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same His name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto His name, and a pure offering' (Mal. i. 11); when all baptized Christians shall be called 'saints'—then, also, the most ordinary and commonplace things, that have no connection with the Temple, shall be just as holy as the consecrated objects and vestments which were dedicated to the special service of Jehovah.

No longer then shall one thing be holy and another thing unholy, but all alike shall be holy, and nothing common or unclean—even as in the vision of heaven there was no temple there because it was all temple, and no sabbath there because it was all sabbatism. Then the pots of the Lord's house, the least-honoured vessels in which the sacrificial flesh used to be boiled, shall be not one whit less holy than the bowls belonging to the altar itself, which received the atoning blood of the sacrifice, and so were most sacred. Nay, further, the text says every household utensil throughout the city shall then be esteemed just as sacred as the vessels of the sanctuary, and as meet for God's service. 'Every

pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord, and those that sacrifice may seethe in them.' The separation once necessary between sacred and profane shall cease, and in the perfected kingdom of God not only shall everything be holy in itself, but all shall be equally holy.

We thus learn the important lesson that when Christ comes, and His broad spiritual religion supersedes the narrow ceremonialism of the Jews, every act of life, every simple household usage, shall be sweetened and hallowed by His Spirit. All shall then know Him, from the least even unto the greatest. In every place shall be offered unto His name a pure offering, from Gentile thuribles no less than Jewish altars. For all Christians shall then be kings and priests unto God. Perhaps it was in order to proclaim this fact that the Apostle St. John in the later years of his life used to wear on his forehead the golden plate ('petalon') of the priesthood (perhaps, too, with the old inscription, 'Holiness unto the Lord'), as an old writer mentions.* He meant, no doubt, to show that the old exclusive Levitical priesthood had passed away, and that now every man was consecrated to a more spiritual priesthood.

We learn, then, that the common implements of daily family life may be pressed into God's service. Nothing so poor and trivial but it may become holy to the Lord —the pots and pails of faithful domestic service, the spades and ploughs of the honest labourer, the weights and scales and ledgers of commercial life. There was a time, I believe, when the heading of every merchant's

* Polycrates of Ephesus in Eusebius, 'Eccles. Hist.,' v. 24. See Lightfoot, 'Philippians,' p. 336; 'Galatians,' p. 252.

day-book used to be the word 'Emmanuel,' to show that 'God was with them' in all their dealings, to 'prevent' them in all their doings.

One of the most popular and venerated deities of that strange but practical people the Chinese is the kitchen-god, whose temple consists of a little niche in the brick cooking range.* Every family, they say, has a ruler who is intimately acquainted with its faults and short-comings. This is the kitchen-god, who at the close of each year ascends to heaven to make an annual report to the Supreme Ruler of the conduct of his family. His deityship presiding over the cuisine, we may presume he took a special interest in the pots and pans, the spits and ovens, and saw that there was no waste of good food, no carelessness in the cooking. It would not be a bad thing, perhaps, if in our Western homes every cook and scullery-maid had the fear of a kitchen-god before her eyes, and did her work as in his presence. I have read of a famous picture of Murillo's, which represents the interior of a convent kitchen, with its work going busily forward, the actors, however, not being monks in coarse dresses, but beautiful white-winged angels. Here one is serenely putting the kettle on the fire to boil; there one with a heavenly grace is lifting up a pail of water; while another is aspiring with up-lifted hands for nothing less tangible than platters on the kitchen dresser. But all are so fully occupied, and working with such a will, and so refining the work in their way of doing it, that the beholder, it is said, almost forgets that pots are pots and pans pans. He only

* J. Doolittle, 'Social Life of the Chinese,' pp. 417-420.

thinks of the angels and ministers of grace, and how naturally and perfectly kitchen work becomes them. The angelic aim and self-forgetfulness consecrates the lowly acts and makes them lovely.*

> 'A something of celestial light
> Round the familiar face of every day.'

An old Jewish story tells how Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, once took service with a man named Tobit, to tend upon his son and act as his guide upon a journey into foreign parts, at the wage of tenpence (a drachm) a day and his keep. It is needless to say that 'brother Azarias,' as the angel let himself be called, performed his humble duties as courier faithfully and well, so that his employer gladly added something to his wages on his return, ere he 'went up to Him that sent him.'† As in heaven so on earth he strenuously did God's will.

He who aims at a high standard in small matters, to do them in the very best way from a sense of duty and in the sight of God makes those small things great—profane things holy. It is to be feared that, if our religion does not influence us in the multitude of trifling things which go to make up life, it will not influence us in the great heroic achievements which are so slow to present themselves. It is only he who is faithful in that which is least that is faithful also in much. *Any thing* that is done heartily as unto the Lord becomes great thereby. In George Herbert's never-too-often-quoted words,

* W. C. Gannett, 'Blessed be Drudgery,' p. 22.
† Book of Tobit, chaps. V. and XII.

'A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine:
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and the action fine.'

'The right way is to take up a thing heartily, if it is only making a bed,' says an old maid-servant in a good work of fiction. 'Making a bed may be done after a Christian fashion, I take it, or else what's to come of such as me in heaven, who've had little enough time on earth for clapping ourselves down on our knees for set prayers.'* An enthusiastic youth, who once expressed to the Scottish commentator, John Brown, his ambition of obtaining a higher sphere in which he could preach and glorify God, got this sensible answer, 'My young friend, a man may glorify God in making broom besoms; stick to your trade, and glorify Him by your life and conversation.' And a like-minded divine, John Newton, expressed his conviction that 'a Christian, if he be but a shoe-cleaner, should be the best in the parish.' And what was this but a prosing of the glorious old doggerel?—

'If I were a cobbler, it would be my pride
The best of all cobblers to be;
If I were a tinker, no tinker beside
Should mend a tin kettle like me,'

which itself is a versifying of a curiously parallel sentiment in the old mystic writer Tauler: 'One can spin, another can make shoes, and all these are gifts of the Holy Ghost. I tell you, if I were not a priest, I should esteem it a great gift that I was able to make shoes, and would try to make them so well as to be a pattern to all.'† Thus, the highest gifts of God's grace

* Mrs. Gaskell, 'Ruth.'
† Tauler, in Inge, 'Christian Mysticism,' p. 11.

can inspire and actuate the lowliest occupations of our daily life. The rays of the glorious sun may be gathered up in a burning-glass to light a kitchen fire. A pot, says the prophet, with all its encrusted blackness, may be an instrument of sacrifice and exhibit 'Holiness unto the Lord.'

Let us see that our religion gets practically worked into our humdrum life, to consecrate our common things. There are no men or women so humble that their life cannot be made great by high endeavour. Their ordinary work or business in the field, the shop, or the office, when religion enters into it, becomes noble as well as useful.

> 'If Love his simple spell but keep,
> Life with ideal eyes to flatter,
> The Grail itself were crockery cheap
> To every day's communion-platter.'*

It is an unfortunate mistake to regard all that is not sacred as profane, according to the old division of history. It encourages the unhappy tendency to regard the actions of our common life as lying outside the sphere of religion.

Prayer, public worship, Holy Communion, reading the Bible and good books—this is one thing. But manual labour, buying and selling and money-making, is another thing quite apart by itself. That is the convenient divorce of what God meant to join together. Religion, it has been well said, does not so much consist in doing sacred, spiritual acts, as in doing worldly acts from sacred, spiritual motives. Many actions outwardly mean and commonplace may then be truly exalted and

* Lowell, 'Heartsease.'

honourable through the state of the heart of him who does them. There may dwell in the breast of a domestic servant, a humble mechanic, or a horny-handed labourer, a spirit that dignifies the coarsest toil and makes even 'drudgery divine.' King Herod, though he sat in glistening robes upon a throne, was a mean ignoble slave. But who will say that the work done in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth was not noble and royal? This is, at least, a partial answer to the question of a rough navvy, who asked a City missionary, 'Do you really think, master, that God Almighty will put me in fire for ever and ever, after putting me in this here mud all my lifetime?' and to the plaintive complaint of a dying coke-burner, 'I have worked seven days and seven nights on and off—you see, I haven't had my chance.' *Some* chance he had, though certainly not an enviable one, that of doing his duty in that state of life to which God had called him (if, indeed, it *was* only to that, and not to something higher, which temperance and industry might have rendered possible). Wherever there is duty there is a chance. And God judgeth a man according to that which he *hath*, not according to that which he hath not. A dweller among the pots and coals may still be a true man doing true work, and getting polished and brightened by that rough discipline for a better portion when the welcome summons arrives, 'Friend, come up higher!'

Our text implies that if anyone strives to do his own business, whatever it be, as unto God and not to man, he may be a king and priest unto God even in the commonest things. In the Temple of old it was holy work to hew wood and mix oil, because it was done for

the altar and the sacred lamps. The child Samuel 'ministered unto the Lord' (1 Sam. iii. 1), though the only ministration we know of his performing was the simple one of 'opening the doors of the house of the Lord' (verse 15). The whole city of Ephesus was proud of being called the 'temple-sweeper,' or sexton, of Artemis the Great (Acts xix. 35). And so all our coarse and common work may receive a consecration if it is done from religious principle and to God's glory. Even a pot may bear the high-priestly inscription, 'Holiness unto the Lord.'

This may possibly be the meaning of the newly-discovered saying of Jesus which excited so much interest a few years ago: 'Raise the stone, and thou shalt find Me; cleave the wood, and there am I.' The simplest worker in performing his appointed task, or the work that is nearest, may discern a Divine presence that he had not suspected. If ye seek Christ, you may find him in the quarry and the wood-yard.

'I, the Peace that passeth knowledge, dwell amid the daily strife;
I, the Bread of Heaven, am broken in the sacrament of life.
Nevermore thou needest seek Me, I am with thee everywhere:
Raise the stone, and thou shalt find Me; cleave the wood, and I am there.'

Stated times and places for religion ought only to be the focussing to a point of the diffused sunshine of life. To collect one's thoughts and compose one's feelings to a pious frame within the silent precincts of the house of prayer, to enter with every appearance of propriety into the offices of religious worship in the quietude of Sunday, is comparatively an easy thing; but the next day to go out into the noisy world and

be religious still, to carry one's solemn thoughts and good resolutions into the throng and thoroughfare of city life, to be upright and truthful and pure in the counting-house, the warehouse, and the factory—that is the true test of the Christian's calling, and there is its triumph. While 'not slothful in business,' to be still 'fervent in spirit,' and always 'serving the Lord.' A life not of periodical observances only, occasional fervours, and spasmodic transports, but of patient continuance in well-doing; of quiet, unobstrusive goodness in the humdrum round of the daily mill; dogged work upon principle; the pursuit of lofty ends amidst lowly toils—this is the true idea of the Christian life to which Christ by His word and example calls us. 'Thou hast been faithful over few things; I will make thee ruler over many things.' 'He raiseth up the poor out of the dust to set them among princes.' Yea, 'though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove that is covered with silver wings and her feathers like gold'—a glorious metamorphosis of the commonplace, from the pots to the resplendent sheen of the skies!

'The commonplace sun in the commonplace sky
Makes up the commonplace day;
The moon and the stars are commonplace things,
And the flower that blooms, and the bird that sings;
And dark were the world, and sad our lot,
If the flowers should fail and the sun shine not:
And God, who studies each separate soul,
Out of commonplace lives makes His beautiful whole.'

VIII

Gnostic Agnosticism

'Ye men of Athens, in all things I perceive that ye are unusually religious. For as I passed along, and observed your objects of worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: To an Unknown God.'—Acts xvii. 22, 23.

When St. Paul in his journeying came to Athens, the Greek capital, he found himself in the centre of the highest culture and intellectual life of that period. As he walked through the open spaces of that beautiful city, what particularly struck him was the variety of symbols of religious belief which everywhere abounded, the immense number of temples, altars, and statues which adorned their streets and squares. It seemed like one great temple crowded with marble deities—'those unhappy half-breeds,' as Heine calls them, 'of gods and stone.'

Accordingly, when the Athenians gave him audience in the Areopagus, with the conciliating spirit of a wise missionary, he began by paying them a compliment which he thought they deserved, that he saw that at all events they were not indifferent to religion. On the contrary, in their heathen way, they were earnestly groping after God, if haply they might find Him. 'I notice,' he said, 'that you are an uncommonly

religious people here. For as I came on my way, and looked at your dedications, I lighted on one altar with this inscription, To A God Unknown.' It appears that when they had erected an altar to every possible god that they knew or could think of, hardly then content with their efforts to stand well with Heaven, they proceeded to something further. Lest they might unwittingly have overlooked or omitted some deity, through ignorance or inadvertence, some deity that expected their votive offering, and that they were bound to worship, with a pious zeal which the Apostle could not but admire they erected yet another altar which they left unappropriated. But not to leave the entablature of this altar entirely blank, they filled it in provisionally with this strange dedication: To an Unknown God.

The feeling of an uneasy conscience is shown similarly in the Penitential Psalm which a Babylonian King, about 760 B.C., addressed to his offended deity:

> 'Against a God, known and *unknown*,
> I have committed errors, I have multiplied rebellions:
> I am afraid, I dread the look of Thy divinity.'*

The inscription at Athens furnished St. Paul with a serviceable *point d'appui*, and gave him a very suitable text for what he wanted to say. 'That "unknown God" whom ye ignorantly worship is *known* to me. I come to you as His ambassador, and can tell you about Him. The God who revealed Himself to Israel of old, the Holy God whose name is Jehovah, who in these latter days has spoken unto us by His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He has sent to save the world — Him declare

* Scheil in *Revue Biblique*, January, 1896, p. 76.

I unto you. He need not any longer be an "unknown God," because He has told us of Himself, and revealed His will and purposes towards us, and has told us also how we are to worship Him in spirit and in truth. That Great Being whom ye dumbly yearn after, to the knowledge of whom ye could never attain, it is my mission to make *known* unto you. "That which I have seen and known declare I unto you." And starting from this, he went on to preach to them of a judgment to come, and the resurrection of the dead. The Athenians, with all their proverbial desire to hear some new thing, found these tidings too new and strange for them. Some began to mock and jeer, and presently they dismissed the Jewish visitor with polite incredulity. They refused to be enlightened; they preferred to keep their altar vacant as beforetime, and themselves to remain worshippers of an 'unknown God.'

It is sad to reflect that there are some among ourselves who in this respect are ready to follow the men of Athens, and worship—if they worship at all—at the same altar: an altar to the unknown. One of the most depressing signs of the present day is the alienation of a large number of our people from religion. They have come to think that they can do very well without it. They abandon public worship as if it had no interest or concern for them. We look round our churches, and we too often notice that the men are conspicuously absent. What is the reason of this? There are, no doubt, various contributory causes; but at the bottom, and chiefly, it is the natural tendency of men to relapse into mere animalism, to let the spiritual

and intellectual sides of their nature lie in abeyance and neglected, to live only with a view to material enjoyment, content to eat, drink, and amuse themselves, and avoid troubling themselves with any of the great problems of time and eternity. It is so much easier, they think, to shut out the thought of the world to come—just to live in the present comfortable animal existence, enjoying the sunshine of life while they can, and then when their time comes to die like the dog.

The men who thus drop church and worship, I think it will be found, are not always the most manly and most thoughtful, but rather those of the weak, shallow, and self-indulgent type. But with some there is another reason, real or alleged, for their absence. A smattering of education is nowadays a very general possession—a second-hand acquaintance with popularized knowledge which puffs people up, and makes them self-sufficient and conceited, when really they are profoundly ignorant. The average young man of the day knows in a hazy sort of fashion that Professor Huxley and Tyndall, Herbert Spencer and Darwin, threw up Christianity, and, as he perhaps would say, have shown that there is nothing in it. This aloofness falls in so well with his previous inclinations that he shelters himself under the names of those eminent philosophers, whose works probably he has never read, and poses as an 'agnostic' in all the delightful indefiniteness of that high-sounding term.

Unfortunately, we preachers cannot address ourselves to these absentees, who are content simply to ignore religion and its ministers, and throw the responsibility on certain great names which they have learned parrot-

like to repeat. I would like, if I had the opportunity, to ask them to examine the position of Professor Huxley, who is their idol, and who, perhaps more than any other, has influenced this generation and weakened its faith in things unseen and spiritual. As a leader of scientific thought, he has had a large following; and being a very lively and interesting writer, candid and downright in the expression of his views, and a strong opponent of superstition and priestcraft in every form, he is naturally a popular favourite. Some of his essays have recently been published in a very cheap form, so as to reach all classes of the community.

In order to define his own position towards the Bible and Christianity, Professor Huxley had recourse to this verse in the Acts, and grounding himself on St. Paul's discovery, he invented a name for himself which he considered expressive of his views, and called himself an Agnostic. This was in 1869, and ever since the name has had considerable vogue. He took the word from the inscription which St. Paul found on the altar at Athens. In the Greek it consisted of the two words ΑΓΝΩΣΤΩι ΘΕΩι (*agnôstô theô*), where *agnôstô* corresponds with literal exactness to our word 'unknown.'

Professor Huxley thus is willing to go back and range himself with those heathen Athenians, who revered a god beyond their ken, and declined to receive the testimony of the Apostle when he offered to enlighten them. His watchword is, 'I don't know. Beyond the world I live in I know nothing.' In opposition to the old sect of the Gnostics, or 'knowing ones,' who laid claim to a special knowledge of mysteries and the spiritual world, he confessed that he, for his part, was

a mere Agnostic, or 'Know-nothing.' He admitted that there were certain unknown forces, powers, agents—call them what we may—which lay outside and beyond his purview; but as to religious faith, he bore sturdily aloft as his ensign a banner with the strange device 'Ignoramus.'*

He says with great candour: 'I do not very much care to speak of anything as "unknowable." What I am sure about is that there are many topics about which I know nothing, and which, so far as I can see, are out of the reach of my faculties. But whether these things are knowable by anyone else is exactly one of those things which is beyond my knowledge.' Let us have his own statement of the case: 'A man may be an Agnostic in the sense of admitting he has no positive knowledge, and yet consider that he has more or less probable ground for accepting any given hypothesis about the spiritual world. Just as a man may frankly declare that he has no means of knowing whether the planets generally are inhabited or not, and yet may think one of the two possible hypotheses more likely than the other, so he may admit that he has no means of knowing anything about the spiritual world, and yet may think one or other of the current views on the subject to some extent probable' ('Lectures and Essays,' Popular Edition, p. 115).

Now, if ~~Professor~~ Huxley stopped there in a state of suspended judgment, we should not have much fault to find with him, though we might regret his scepticism. He says candidly: 'I don't know; I am not convinced. I want more evidence, so I stand aside and say nothing.

* See an article in the *Quarterly Review*, No. 359, p. 160 *et seq.*

I leave these questions to others, who think they understand them better.' But here comes what seems to me the unscientific part of his conduct. He does not stop there, and it is surprising that so clever a man did not recognise his own mistake. He begins to say, not 'I don't know,' but '*I do know*.' 'I know the contrary, that it is not true, though I admit the whole subject lies outside my understanding.' His negative scepticism passes over into positive denial. The Agnostic becomes a downright Gnostic. It is pretty much as if an astronomer were passionately to deny that there are any inhabitants in Mars, while confessing that he has no conclusive evidence one way or another. So Professor Huxley is confident that there are no such things as evil spirits. He is willing to make that his test point. Instead of calmly acknowledging that, being an Agnostic, he does not and cannot know whether there are or are not such beings, he positively asserts, 'I *know* there are *none*.'

Here we must judge him out of his own mouth, and have his own very words. He writes, '"Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man" (Mark v. 8) are the words attributed to Jesus. I have no hesitation in declaring that I utterly disbelieve in the existence of "unclean spirits," and consequently in the possibility of their "coming forth" out of a man' ('Lectures and Essays,' p. 85). And again: 'I, for my part, *unhesitatingly* refuse belief in that teaching, and *deny* the reality of those spiritual convictions' (p. 122). But a proper Agnostic *ought to hesitate* about making positive assertions as to things beyond his ken. For he says, we observe, no longer, 'I *don't know* whether such things are *true*,' but

a very different thing, 'I *do know* that they are *false*,' which is the positive position of the Gnostic. The same weakness of argumentation is noticeable when we compare the following passages: 'Ecclesiasticism says: "The demonology of the Gospels is an essential part of that account of that spiritual world, the truth of which it declares to be certified by Jesus. Agnosticism (*me judice*) says: There is no good evidence of the existence of a demoniac spiritual world, and much reason for doubting it"' (p. 115). That is to say, a contested point comes before the bench on which Professor Huxley sits as impartial judge. After hearing all the evidence on either side, he gives his judgment, 'Not proven,' and then sums up strongly against the defendant as undoubtedly guilty, in terms which would lead one to think that he possessed some weighty private *gnosis*, or knowledge, on the other side which was not brought before the court, but was highly detrimental to the accused. For a few lines after the statements printed above he adds: 'Whether Jesus sanctioned the demonological part of Christianity or not, *I unhesitatingly reject it*' (p. 115). So it comes to this, as a plain issue: we have to make our choice between believing Jesus Christ, who says, 'We speak that we do *know*, and testify that we have *seen*,' or Thomas Huxley, who confesses, '*I don't know* anything about an unseen world.' Jesus says there *are* evil spirits, and gives proof of their existence: Huxley makes the unsupported assertion, 'There are *none*.'

So far as I can see his argument is this: Anything that has not come within my own experience does not exist; but evil spirits have not come within my experi-

ence; therefore they do not exist. 'If Jesus,' he says, 'taught the demonological system involved in the Gadarene story—if a belief in that system formed a part of the spiritual convictions in which He lived and died—then *I, for my part, unhesitatingly refuse* belief in that teaching, and *deny* the reality of those spiritual convictions' (p. 122). It is psychologically curious to note how fond the Agnostic is of the word 'unhesitatingly,' a word which he ought to have eliminated from his vocabulary before he entered on these investigations. How completely his *parti pris* clouds his judgment is manifest from the following statement: 'If "Matthew," "Mark," and "Luke" are really responsible for the Gospels, it is not the better for the Gadarene story, but the worse for them; these reports discredit the witnesses' (p. 126). Here the argument amounts to this: 'I, Thomas Huxley, know that there are no evil spirits; St. Matthew says there are; therefore he is a credulous and untrustworthy writer'—the Gnostic against the world!

Let us put an analogous case. A box is placed before me on the table securely closed and locked. Three good men of character and repute—say Lord Salisbury, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Lord Roberts—assure me that they have seen this box opened, and that it contains a valuable diamond worth £100,000. I see no reason why I should withhold my belief; it is not impossible, though stones of that value are certainly uncommon, and I have never seen such. Now, if Mr. Huxley were standing by he might conceivably, though hardly wisely, maintain his position as an Agnostic, and say, 'Well, I don't know—I have not seen it myself;

I suspend my judgment. I decline, at all events, to make a bid for the hidden treasure, which may or may not be there.' But this, to judge from analogy, is not what he would say. He would roundly assert, 'I know that it *does not* contain any such thing as is asserted. Those who believe it are credulous.' But this surely is an unscientific frame of mind. It is the attitude of a Gnostic, confident of his own knowledge. If that casket were offered to me, I should be sorry to refuse it at a price, on account of his mere denial of its value. And, similarly, I should be sorry to give up Christianity either in deference to his *ipse dixit* or *ipse novit*, because *he* knows there is nothing in it.

The fact is, there is a religious faculty, a spiritual sense by which spiritual things are discerned. Without this faith is impossible. In this faculty Professor Huxley seems to have been sadly deficient. A man of science, not inferior to himself, but one who did possess this faculty and was a devout Christian—Pascal—said: 'The heart has reasons of its own, of which the intellect knows nothing.' It would not be easy, for instance, to produce a scientific proof that one ought to love one's mother. The intellect, indeed, is an excellent handmaid to religion, to gather and minister fuel for her fire, but the afflictions and feelings are the vital part of it. True religion is a matter of feeling, illumined by the understanding, and exhibited in life and action.

Everywhere in Scripture it is presupposed as an axiom that it is possible to know God, and our duty to know Him. 'Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace.' 'This is life eternal, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.'

He came to make us know Him and reveal His will, so that knowing Him we know the Father also. Of the greatness and the glory of God, indeed, it is but little we can know, but of His love, His goodness, and His wishes we can know much. While there are many things in His providential government of which we must needs be ignorant, and many speculative questions on which we are compelled to be Agnostics, we have knowledge and light enough for what is practical and concerns our daily life. And we are promised that, if we are faithful to what we do know, our knowledge will grow from more to more. 'If any man wishes to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.' On the other hand, St. Paul speaks it as a reproach to the Corinthians that 'some have an ignorance (*agnôia*) of God' (1 Cor. xv. 34).

We might almost think that St. John, who resisted the Gnostics of his own day, had the future Agnostics in his mind when he thus anticipated their unbelief: 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God hath made Him a liar, because he believed not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. . . . And we *know* that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may *know* Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.'

IX

The Gospel of the Virgin

'Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.'—St. Luke ii. 19.

All that concerned Jesus Mary safeguarded in her memory as a sacred deposit. She preserved the marvellous secrets of our Lord's birth and infancy deep in her heart's recess, and with the brooding fondness of a mother she cherished every little incident and trait of His early years. We cannot but wish that the Virgin had left a written record of those memories of which she was the depository. How priceless would such a narrative have been, coming from the hand of one who was so intimately near to the heart and life of the Saviour! You will be surprised, perhaps, if I venture to say that some such record *has* come down to us from her. I will give you my reasons for thinking so.

St. Luke introduces his Gospel by remarking that it was his object to trace his facts accurately from the very first by taking the testimony of eye-witnesses. Indeed, we may be quite sure that St. Luke, in making his researches, sought out diligently those who knew the Lord Jesus personally—those who, in St. Peter's words, 'had companied with Him all the time that He

went in and out among them, beginning from the baptism of John until that same day that He was taken up from them'—those who could say, with St. John, 'that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life, declare we unto you.' We may be sure, too, that St. Luke would seek out other testimony than that of the Apostles, if such were to be had. He would go back further to the fountain-head. Since he made it his object to trace things back from the very first, as he says, I think we may be quite sure that he sought out and questioned the chief actor of all who then survived—the Virgin Mary herself—and took down from her lips the Divine facts and mysteries which she had long 'kept, and pondered in her heart.'

For how, we may ask—how did St. Luke come to know all the minute circumstances that led up to the birth of Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist? What happened first of all to Zacharias, the priest, as he offered incense in the Temple, when no one else was present—how that an angel appeared to him, and foretold that he would have a son; and how Zacharias gave utterance to his doubts, and was struck dumb; and how eventually, recovering his speech, he broke into the prophetic song familiar to us all as the *Benedictus* ('Blessed be the Lord God of Israel')? Was it not because Mary had it all from her cousin Elizabeth, the mother of the Baptist, and imparted it to St. Luke? How else could he have known of the appearance of the great angel Gabriel to the Virgin of Nazareth *in her secret chamber*—nay, the very words of amazing import which he then spoke to her, announcing the birth of

the Saviour, and what the Virgin in her meekness then replied? No one but Mary herself could *possibly* have told him of all those things.

Then again, and still more emphatically, how could St. Luke have known what passed between the two holy women when Mary visited Elizabeth, and Elizabeth saluted her with lowly reverence as the chosen 'mother of her Lord'? How could he have known, word for word, the noble hymn of thanksgiving that Mary poured forth, and which has ever since been the daily song of the Church, the *Magnificat?* ('My soul doth magnify the Lord'). Assuredly, he could only have learnt it from the lips of the Virgin herself.

And then, coming to the most hidden mystery of all, the Holy of Holies, how could St. Luke have known all the circumstances attending the Virgin's journey up to Bethlehem, and the birth there of her firstborn—of the visit of the shepherds, with all its picturesque details as to what they saw and heard on that awful night, the sudden brightness of that angel throng, and the very words in which they announced their glorious message, and what the wondering shepherds then said and did—except that those shepherds, as we are informed, made known the saying that was told them concerning this child, and that then 'Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart,' and in due time unfolded the treasure of all these hoarded memories to the listening ears of the Evangelist, St. Luke?

From whom, again, was it that this writer obtained his account of the presentation of the infant Jesus in the Temple, with all the minute circumstantial details which accompanied it; the coming in of the aged

Anna, and all her antecedents; the account of the aged Simeon, which brings the old man before our eyes, as he takes up the child in his arms and, with uplifted eyes, pours forth that dying strain of thanksgiving which we know so well, 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,' and how, furthermore, he spoke to the mother herself solemn words which she never forgot, 'Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also'? May we not confidently assume that it was Mary who transmitted all those particulars to St. Luke?

And, finally, after telling us how 'the child Jesus grew and waxed strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom'; and yet again, with that repeated dwelling on the growth and progress of her child which is so natural in a mother, that 'Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man,' or, as we in our modern talk would say, 'He grew up to be a tall boy, and every year unfolded more and more the loveliness of His character,' St. Luke gives then one striking anecdote of His boyhood: how He once lingered behind in Jerusalem to be examined by the doctors in the Temple, and won their high approval. Whom have we to thank for that account, giving, as it does, the very first recorded words of the Saviour, and the erring, imperfect words of Mary, which called forth His gentle reproach? They could have come from none other than Mary herself, the loving mother who treasured up every word and act and look of her Divine Son, and, in response to the Evangelist's close inquiries, imparted to him the lore which she had retained indelibly printed on the tablets of her heart—'kept, and pondered.'

Indeed, those words of St. Luke appear to give a plain hint as to the source of his information. Who but a thoughtful, contemplative mother would have preserved these sacred memories of the Holy Childhood? The whole narrative, indeed, in its idyllic grace and singular sweetness, has been thought to bear the colouring of a *woman's* mind—it certainly betrays a *woman's* heart. It has been suggested, too, that the old tradition that St. Luke painted a portrait of the Blessed Virgin may have originated in a misunderstanding of the fact that he depicted the very features of the Virgin in his graphic reproduction of her reminiscences. She drew the outlines and supplied the hints which enabled him to paint the finished picture—a picture, however, not of her, but of her Divine Son. 'Luke, with the painter's license, gazed into Mary's face as none other but the infant Jesus had ever gazed into it,' says a pious writer. 'He read the Mysteries of Bethlehem depicted there. He drank the spirit of the Sacred Infancy in the fountains of her eyes. He lived with the Mother of Mercy until he saw nothing but mercy in her Son.' 'When he comes to our Lord's public life and His intercourse with men, it is just such manifestations of His sacred heart as are most congenial to the spirit of the Sacred Infancy which his predilection chooses for his written portrait of the Incarnate Word. He is by appointment of the Holy Ghost the painter of Mary and the secretary of the Infant Jesus' (F. W. Faber).

It would not be too much, then, to say that for these first two chapters of St. Luke we are indebted to the Virgin, and that this Gospel of the Infancy might fairly be called the 'Gospel according to St. Mary.' As

another faithful Mary was the first to announce the Gospel of the Resurrection, even to the Apostles, so this Mary was the first to reveal the Gospel of the Nativity to an Evangelist.

Notice an important truth we learn here incidentally. We have often, I imagine, a wrong idea about inspiration. We think that the inspired writers had nothing to do but remain perfectly passive, in a kind of religious ecstasy, while God, in some mysterious way, imparted to them information which otherwise they could never have obtained. We think that man had nothing to do but sit still and receive the Divine communication. Nevertheless, there are many hints in the books of Scripture themselves which show that they are the result of patient labour and arduous research on the part of their writers, while the Holy Spirit guided and overruled their labours, so as to fulfil God's purpose and impart spiritual truth. St. Luke, for example, begins his Gospel by telling us frankly that he availed himself of all human sources of information. He says expressly that *he* did as *others* did who had drawn up a narrative of the matters believed among Christians, even as those who were eye-witnesses from the beginning handed them down. He, too, on his own account made careful researches and investigations. He sought out first-hand information, and when he 'interviewed,' as we now say, those eye-witnesses, he did not fail first and foremost to obtain all possible information, as we have seen, from the Blessed Virgin herself.

And so with many of the books of the Old Testament. They were often compiled, selected, and arranged, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, from earlier

records and the chronicles of old times. Take the opening chapters of Genesis. We know to a certainty that the inspired writer must have had older documents before him which he made use of. There is no doubt about this, because those earlier documents have been preserved in the Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions, which go back to a period far older than the time of Moses. These tablets have in recent years been deciphered and read, and so curiously do their accounts agree with the account in Genesis that we have no choice but to believe that both alike come from a common source in a still earlier record. Moses, therefore, like St. Luke, as a careful compiler, must have entered on other men's labours. But at the same time we notice that the Hebrew narrative infinitely transcends the heathen cosmogony in dignity, simplicity, and spiritual truth. The Holy Spirit, as at the beginning, has moved over the face of chaos with energising power, and brought Divine order out of confusion. The old tradition as to the creation and the origin of man has not been set aside, but it has been recast, purified, and hallowed, and made to convey high teaching upon eternal verities.

Now, going back for a moment to the beginning, let us imitate the Virgin in both keeping and pondering the truths which we hear, not only keeping them in remembrance, but meditating on them and bringing them forth to light in the fruits of a Christian life. How often does the Lord urge us to these two things: first, careful hearing and pondering, and then active obedience! 'Let these sayings of Mine sink down into your ears.' 'He that heareth these sayings of Mine, and *doeth* them, he is the wise man that buildeth on

a rock.' 'The good ground are they who in an honest and good heart *keep* the word, and bring forth *fruit* with patience.' We are in danger of hearing and reading and knowing many things about religion, but thinking and reflecting little. We are in danger of listening to many sermons and many services without weighing their meaning or assimilating their teaching, 'ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.' So the things of God must be both kept and pondered, must be obeyed and acted upon as well as remembered. 'He that *keepeth* my sayings, he it is that loveth Me.' 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them.'

For we must remember it was Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of Mary, who asked the question, 'Who is My mother?' And Himself who gave the answer, 'Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My mother.' Not less blessed even than she that bare Him 'are they that hear the Word of God, and *keep* it.'

X

God as a Grasshopper

'It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers.'—Is. xl. 22.

Christmas brings us face to face with the mystery of all mysteries, with a thought which is simply overwhelming, 'the mystery of His holy Incarnation.' It is a time to think—a time when all the learning and eloquence of man is sadly out of place, because it attempts to do that which cannot be done, either to define the Infinite or to magnify it, both equally in vain. Our only resource is to pause and think and brood inwardly in still contemplation.

The two thoughts which, in all their glaring contradiction, have to be realised, and then blended into one, are the infinite greatness of God and the finite smallness of man—these two merged and united in the thought of our Lord's Incarnation. The two sides of the mystery, its height and its depth, are very vividly suggested to us in this passage from the lesson for the Sunday after Christmas: 'Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood it from the foundations of the earth? It is He that sitteth upon

the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the skies as a curtain [or awning over the earth], and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. 'The circle of the earth' seems to refer to the vast overarching dome of the sky, which like a spacious vault of clear sapphire is reared above the earth, having the horizon for its base. As Job expresses it:

'Is not God in the height of heaven?
And behold the height of the stars, how high they are! . . .
He walketh on the vault of heaven.'*

Above that 'brave o'erhanging canopy the sky' the Almighty Creator is represented as enthroned in majestic repose, high and lifted up. And from that inconceivable height he looks down and surveys all the works that He hath made, and with special heed the footstool which lies beneath His feet. 'Heaven is His throne, earth is His footstool.'

And then in one graphic touch we have contrasted with that superexalted greatness the littleness of men: 'The inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers.' From the unruffled calm of heaven He looks down on His creatures in their hurrying unrest and bounding ambitions, a busy agitated multitude, and they are to Him as 'grasshoppers.' 'The Lord sitteth above the waterfloods, be the earth never so unquiet.' The Lord alone is exalted. 'Behold,' says the prophet here, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, the isles are as the fine dust that is lifted up' (verse 15). 'He bringeth princes to nothing; He maketh the

* Job xxii. 12, 14.

judges of the earth as vanity. . . . He bloweth upon them, and they wither' (verses 23, 24). Let us note, in passing, what a striking exemplification of this latter truth comes before us on the Feast of the Holy Innocents. King Herod lifted himself up against the Most High, and thought to defeat His plans. As it had been predicted,

> 'The kings of the earth set themselves,
> And the rulers take counsel together,
> Against the Lord and against His Christ,'

so was it fulfilled,

> 'He that sitteth in the heavens [did] laugh:
> The Lord [did] have them in derision.'*

We are reminded of the contemptuous words in which He set at naught a mighty King of Assyria: 'Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy marshals as the swarms of grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day; but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are' (Nah. iii. 17)—a notable fulfilment, surely, of the words: 'It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers.' There is here, then, evidently something *more* than a graphic figure of speech to convey the idea that the people of the earth are so far remote that they seem dwarfed and dwindled as the Almighty looks down upon them, by reason of the immense intervening distance. Just as, in Virgil's 'Æneid,' Jupiter, looking down from the summit of the heavens, sees the lands lying outstretched beneath his gaze, and the sea clothed with sails and its far-extended

* Ps. ii. 2, 4.

shores (i. 223-225); or as one in Shakespeare, standing on a lofty cliff, exclaims:

> 'How dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low! . . .
> The fishermen, that walk upon the beach,
> Appear like mice.'*

No, not merely relatively, but really and in themselves, the inhabitants of the earth are minute, insignificant creatures, weak and of small account—poor insects. It is a natural comparison for that which is feeble and contemptible. When the spies sent to search the land of Canaan saw the gigantic people of the country, they lost all heart, and said, 'We were in our own sight as grasshoppers.' Those short-lived people of the meadows, with their filmy wings and long, brittle legs, whose clittering whir makes their summer lives one ceaseless song—a careless foot may crush them and never know what wrong it has done. They are one of the Bible's natural emblems of frailty and impotence.

> 'I go hence like the shadow that departeth,
> And am driven away as the grasshopper,'†

complained the Psalmist in his misery. Yes, all flesh is as grass, and all who dwell in it are as grasshoppers. Men, in even their best estate, compared to the Eternal, who sits aloft, are as insects of a day—a humiliating comparison for human pride. You have doubtless seen an ant-hill that has been disturbed. You almost felt disposed to smile at the consternation among the active little citizens of that mound, at the restless energy and apparently futile zeal with which they traversed their beaten paths and galleries, running to and fro in a

* 'Lear,' IV. vi. † Ps. cix. 23 (P.B.).

ferment of anxiety. So busy are they in their own pursuits that the Germans have taken from them their word for 'active' and 'diligent'—*emsig*, which just means 'antlike.' The most earnest and diligent man of business they call *emsig* ('antlike'). Such is the state of man. Good Archbishop Leighton said: 'Oh, how pitiful and scanty are all those things which beset us, before, behind, and on every side! The bustling we observe is nothing but the hurrying of ants, eagerly engaged in their little labours.'* It is thus, we may conceive, that this earth and its inhabitants seem to heaven and its people. 'Man, proud man, drest in a little brief authority . . . plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven as make the angels weep'—perhaps sometimes smile! This is the strong contrast drawn in our text—God and His creature man; the Almighty in the height of heaven, and the grasshoppers upon earth. And this is the humiliating answer we have to give to the Psalmist's question:

> 'Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him?
> And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?'†

He is a grasshopper. And we cannot but wonder at the daring request which is made in another Psalm, where having asked again:

> 'Lord, what is man, that Thou takest knowledge of him?
> Or the son of man, that Thou makest account of him?
> Man is like to vanity:
> His days are as a shadow that passeth away;'

he nevertheless in the very next line prefers this almost presumptuous petition:

> 'Bow Thy heavens, O Lord, and come down.'‡

* 'Works,' 1844, p. 633. † Ps. viii. 4. ‡ Ps. cxliv. 3-5.

'Come down' from Thy seat above the skies, to dwell, down here, with the inhabitants of the earth.

But in due time that prayer of humanity was heard and answered. This is the astounding revelation of Christmas: that Christ, the Word, who not only was in the beginning with God, but was Himself the God by whom all things were made—that He was made flesh, and dwelt among us here on the earth. This was the unanswerable enigma, as he thought, of one Agur, in the Book of Proverbs:

'Who hath ascended up into heaven, and descended?
Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?
Who hath bound the waters in his garment?
Who hath established all the ends of the earth?
What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou knowest?'*

Yes, we do know—now. His name is Jehovah, the everlasting Father, and His Son's name is Jesus. Solomon describes His pre-existent glory as the Divine Wisdom, seated beside His Father, in the eighth chapter of Proverbs:

'The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way,
Before His works of old.
I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning,
Or ever the earth was. . . .
When He established the heavens, I was there:
When He set a circle upon the face of the deep . . .
Then I was by Him, as master workman:
And I was daily His delight,
Rejoicing always before Him;
Rejoicing in His habitable earth;
And my delight was with the sons of men.'†

And now we learn to what length and depth that love for men led Him—that He came, from sitting

* Prov. xxx. 4. † Prov. viii. 22-31.

above the circle of the earth, down among the inhabitants of the earth, which are as grasshoppers. Nay, far more. Not merely content to sojourn among them in His Divinity to do them good, He Himself became as one of them—Himself a son of man, Himself *a grasshopper!* There is the marvel of the Incarnation, in its bare and startling antithesis, from which the prophet's statement will not let us escape—the great God became as a grasshopper!

I have read many works of fancy and imagination, of wild romance and Oriental apologue, in which writers of fiction let their unbridled thoughts run riot; but I cannot recall one in which a writer has ventured to imagine that some wise, powerful, and glorious monarch has ever, by some magic, voluntarily transformed himself into an insect, like an ant or grasshopper, and then has given up years of his life that he might live among those feeble and insignificant creatures as one of themselves, treading their obscure and narrow paths, in order that he might understand their ways and modes of thinking; and might be able to teach them, and ennoble them, and lead them up to a higher platform of existence near himself. They felt, no doubt, that such a conception would overpass the bounds of sobriety, and make too heavy a demand upon the reader's assent. In classical story, indeed, we do read of a demi-god who was transformed into a grasshopper, but this was sore against his will, by a sad compulsion. Tithonus, they fabled, was the husband of the Dawn, Aurora, and was gifted with the fatal gift of immortality. He could not die, but he grew old; and the decrepit old man dwindled and dried up, in the long

lapse of time, till he became a white-haired shadow, roaming like a dream; and finally he shrivelled into a feeble grasshopper. That was no parallel. Nor was that fate which overtook the great King of Babylon for his overweening pride. We read in Daniel that Nebuchadnezzar was brought down from his throne, and was driven from among men, and did eat grass as an ox, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. That was indeed a pathetic descent, and the greatest degradation conceivable, that a mighty king should be reduced to the level of a brute beast. It was his punishment, inflicted on him by a higher power. But to come down *willingly* from the height of heaven, to be 'as a *grasshopper*'—that is the measure of the love of God in Christ. 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; I cannot attain unto it.'

> 'It is high as heaven; what canst thou do?
> Deeper than Sheôl; what canst thou know?
> The measure thereof is longer than the earth,
> And broader than the sea.'*

We see that in this case truth is stranger than any fiction. What man could hardly allow himself to imagine, that God did when 'He was made man.' 'I Jehovah am the first,' he says, 'and with the last I am He' (Is. xli. 4)—with the last and lowliest—'Emmanuel,' 'God with us.' It is only, now that the manhood has been taken into God, that those words come fully true, when spoken by the Persons of the Trinity: 'Behold, the man has become one of Us.' Therefore, 'fear not, thou worm Jacob, ye petty folk of Israel;† I will help thee, saith the Lord; thy Redeemer is the Holy One

* Job xi. 8, 9.

† So Cheyne on Is. xli. 14.

of Israel' (Is. xli. 14), a Redeemer so humiliated that He could say, 'I am a worm, and no man' (Ps. xxii. 6).

Was I not right, then, in saying at first that the mystery of the Incarnation is one to be pondered dumbly rather than to be expounded or expatiated upon in glowing periods? 'Praise is silent before him.' If we speak of it, it must be in the language of extravagance, because the condescension it implies is extravagant, transgressing all bounds. We sometimes almost wonder at the quiet and composed moderation of the Apostle's words when he sets forth this doctrine: 'Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor' (2 Cor. viii. 9). 'Rich,' 'poor'—what inadequate words are these! 'Being in the form of God, He counted not His equality with God a thing to be jealously clung to; but He emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, by coming to be in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself [further] by becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross' (Phil. ii. 6-8). 'A worm, and no man.' We feel that the Apostle rises better to the height of this high argument when he breaks into a half-articulate cry of wonder and admiration, and ejaculates, 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing out!' (Rom. xi. 33).

'The heaven for height, and the earth for depth,' says Solomon (Prov. xxv. 3). 'He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth'—there is the height. 'The inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers'—there is the

depth. From that to this He came down, 'for us men and for our salvation.'

So true it is, that 'neither height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' There is no thought so elevating and humiliating as this—so exalting, since man, in God, now sits above the circle of the earth; so abasing at the same time, since 'He took upon Him our flesh . . . that all mankind might follow the example of His great humility.'

XI

Lost and Dead

'This thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.'—St. Luke xv. 32.

I may assume that the reader is perfectly familiar with the touching story which concludes with these words—a story the most exquisite, perhaps, in the whole Bible, and the most exquisitely told. 'A certain man had two sons.' One of these was ever constant and faithful to his father, dutifully doing his will, and abiding with him always without any deviation from the path of rectitude, honour and obedience. The younger son, however, was of a very different character, self-willed, discontented, and inclined to roam. Like many another foolish lad, he grew restless, and chafed against the wholesome restraints of his home. He imagined he would be happier if he could get away from his father's roof, and set up for himself in some strange place where he was not known and could enjoy the license of independence. So he took his portion of goods and set off to 'a far country,' where there would be no control over him, and he could go his own way, and take his fling, and indulge himself to the full in riotous living.

For a time, while his money lasted, he managed to

obtain a certain amount of enjoyment out of his coarse dissipation. But it did not last long. When his money was spent—it is the usual story—his gay companions fell off and turned their backs upon him, and he began to be in want. This country, far off from the father—what else is it but the region of sin where men live 'without God in the world,' turning every one to his own ways; and there is 'a great famine' in that land. The spendthrift son expected to find it a heaven upon earth; he found it a very hell. In his sore straits he had to seek such work as he could find, and he took it under a hard task-master, 'a citizen of that country,' a true native and representative of that sterile land, who had no bowels of compassion, but set him to the ignominious occupation of feeding his swine.

Surely, that hard task-master to whom the sinner sells himself for degrading work can be none other than Satan, who pays the wages of sin to his bondsmen. And that famine-stricken land is that where men, hungering and thirsting, as Isaiah says, 'spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not.' This unfortunate lad brought himself down almost to the level of the brutes he tended, and he almost envied them, that in their lower beast-nature they could batten on refuse and garbage as he could not. 'He would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him.' He longed for something cleaner and more sustaining, for 'bread' that would really nourish him in his higher nature as man; but, for all his fellows cared, he might die of starvation.

Then, in the lowest depths of his despair—like one

who had been distraught and out of his proper mind—'he came to himself.' He realised his position and began to think. 'Why am I here at all? Is this my native place and proper sphere? I, who belong to a good family and have a wealthy father, and a home—far off, alas! as I have made it—still *my* home, in which I was born, where there is abundance of everything, yea, enough and to spare even for the hired servants—servants that should be waiting on *me* now, as I am waiting on these swine.'

And thus thinking he formed a high resolve, 'I will arise, and go to my father'—'arise, stand up as becomes a man, and no longer lie prostrate and wallowing in this farmyard filth. I will stand up upon my feet, and lift up my head in humble, hopeful confidence. I will go home. For, after all, *I am* my father's son. He has never disowned me as I deserved. I believe he has still a father's love even for *me*, unworthy as I have proved myself.'

That was the turning-point—what we usually call 'conversion,' when a sinner *turns* from the error of his ways, knows and confesses how grievously he has fallen, and *turns*, as a last resort, to God, his ever-loving Father, knowing that He will receive and welcome him when no one else would.

So he found it. His father was even better than he thought—more loving than he had expected. 'While he was yet a great way off,' still far away, tottering home with gaunt form, downcast mien, and soiled attire, his father's quick eye saw him—no doubt he was on the lookout—and in that piteous wreck, bowed down with shame, he recognised his own boy, who had left him so

comely and hopeful and self-confident. His heart melted with compassion at the sight; and the kind old man in his eagerness 'ran,' actually 'ran'—more than he had done, we may imagine, for many a day—and threw his arms around the prodigal's neck, and covered him with kisses—'My son! my son!'

And the son never got out the repentant speech he had prepared. His father knew all, and prevented it with kisses. Then there was unbounded gladness and rejoicing in the house, and the very best it contained was placed at his disposal. It was a great home-coming!

The two things that stand out in the story plain for all to read are these—the utter *misery* which the sinner by his sin, when he turns to his own way, brings upon himself; and the infinite *love* of God, which is ready to receive him whenever he truly repents and turns back from his evil way.

Now, I am about to venture on what may seem almost too presumptuous a thing for one to do: to borrow the framework of this parable on which to construct a variant of my own—a parable by way of contrast to that spoken by the Lord Jesus, which some people would not hesitate to accept. I am going to make the supposition that the prodigal son, though intensely conscious of his misery, *did not come home.* He continues in the service of the foreign master, frequenting the sty, and goes on trying to satisfy his cravings with the husks. He found them unspeakably dry and bitter to his taste, quite unfit for *human* food, though they might serve well enough for swine. He tries to content himself with the society of those un-

clean animals, but he cannot hide from himself that he was born for better things. He cannot quite forget the great house from which he came, and his father's love and generosity. He remembers dimly the happy days of his innocency, when he played through the halls of his childhood, the bountiful plenty of that home where he *ought* to be, where his father's servants did him service. Nevertheless, though he retained some dull recollection of all those things, he never quite 'came to himself' so far as to reclaim his heritage; he never 'arose,' never attempted to find his way back to the father whom he had abandoned so wilfully. Whether it was that he had forgotten the way home, or that his heart had grown hardened in its rebellion, or that he was ashamed to meet his father's eye after all those years of degradation, ashamed of his rags and tatters and filthy condition—perhaps he had even come to *like* the draff if he got used to it—at all events, *he never came home.* But the father meanwhile had not forgotten his unworthy son. His heart still yearned after the wanderer, and pitied him with unutterable compassion. 'Yet doth He devise means that His banished be not expelled from Him' (2 Sam. xiv. 14). So he resolved to send and summon him back. He rose up early, and despatched one of his many servants to that far-off land with an urgent message to his long-lost son, 'Come home! come home! and all will be forgiven!' But he would not come.

Again, after a time, he made another effort, and sent another servant with even more pressing words and warmer offers of forgiveness—yea, with presents and tokens of affection. But he would not come. With

wonderful patience and long-suffering the father did the same again and again from time to time. But he would not come. Then, last of all, his father bethought him of one thing more to win back the prodigal, which he had not tried before. He said to his true and faithful son, who had never crossed his will, 'Thou art my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. Thou hast been ever with me, and all that I have is thine. Wilt thou consent to leave me for a time, and go after thy lost brother, and seek him out until thou find him? It may be he will reverence my son, though he would not hearken to my servants.'

And the good son answered, 'Sir, I will go and bring him home.' So he set out at once for that far-off country, a long and painful journey. And when he came there he disguised himself like the poor swine-herd that he might gain access to him the more readily. He even let himself be brought under the tyranny and cruel oppression of the citizen of that country, that he might be tried exactly as his brother was tried.

But, will you believe it? though he thus stooped to share his brother's poverty and misery, though he reasoned with him, and reminded him of his father's house, and gave him convincing proofs that there were many rooms prepared there for his reception, and that there was no obstacle on his father's part, if only he would return, still, he would not come. I will not say how he treated his elder brother when he came on this embassy of love; how he disowned him, drove him away, and conspired with the citizen of that country to take his life. The son had to return to his father disappointed and rejected. His mission had not been successful.

Now, I am not going to 'apply' this altered version of the parable and what is to follow. Homilies are all the better if they apply themselves. They sometimes fail of their effect because they try to do all the work, and leave nothing for the reader or hearer to do for himself. I would rather that his own heart and conscience should supply the application, praying at the same time that God, by His Spirit of Truth, may help him to a true interpretation, and preserve him from error, and, further, that He may pardon what is here written should any word suggest what is wrong, untrue, or contrary to His will.

To continue, then. The good son has now returned home, his mission having so far failed. And as to the prodigal son—he never came home. He went on living in his pain and misery, an outcast and a rebel hopelessly. Then, as nothing more could be done, the loving father and his loving son dwelt together in their great house, perfectly happy. They put the lost one out of their thoughts completely. They sent no more messages to him, but gave him up as incorrigible. He had made his bed, and there he must lie. He had only himself to blame. And so he never did come home.

But in the great house they made merry and were glad year after year. The servants fed plentifully, and there were abundance of lights and music, and feasting, and dancing. And all the while the poor lost prodigal son—yes, still a son, though a most unworthy one—poor and blind and miserable, went on still pining away in his punishment, ruined and starving. He stood out in his obduracy, and never, never came home. And some (may God forgive them !) even said that it added

to the happiness of the great house to think of the sufferings of the lost one. At all events, as if he had never been, they were content, perfectly happy and satisfied ever afterwards—the father, though one half of his family was missing and as good as dead, but dead in a living death ; and the good son, quite satisfied with the travail of his soul, the results of his mission, though his brother never came back, but was lost for ever.

Can this be a true parable? I need not remind you that it is only *my* parable, *man's* parable, and *not* the parable of the Lord Jesus Christ. *He* never spoke it, nor *could* He have spoken it. He would have all men to be saved. He would fain 'gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad,' into one fold under one Shepherd. In *His* parable—thank God!—it so came about that the father's house *at last* contained the whole family again, united and unbroken, all safe and sound, no son missing. And the last words that are left chiming in our ears, like the jubilant peal of joyous bells, are these glorious, heart-stirring words: 'It was meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found.'

XII

Patriarchal Heredity

'Is not he rightly named Jacob ['supplanter']? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing.'—GEN. xxvii. 36.

ONE consideration, which tends strongly to confirm our faith in the trustworthiness of the Bible narrative as a history, is its transparent truthfulness. It paints the characters of the heroes and saints, for whom it bespeaks our interest, with amazing candour, and shows them as subject to the same ugly faults, defects, and meanness, as mark ordinary men in all ages. There is always a temptation for a biographer to suppress those passages in the life of his hero which seem to be unworthy of him—to soften his failings, to exalt and magnify his virtues. There are few artists but idealise their portraits, to the extent, at least, of choosing the most favourable point of view. But the Bible narrative is as impartial as the photograph painted by the light from heaven, which will not lie—a downright presentment which tells everything, and puts in all the wrinkles, and wens, and warts, and gray hairs, of its subject. It tells the whole truth—conceals nothing, extenuates nothing, exaggerates nothing. The result is that there

is no perfect character in the whole of the long portrait gallery of Scripture, except that of the Lord Jesus Christ, who stands apart, separate from sinners. Those exhibited are all true to nature, and the more interesting and instructive to ourselves because they are complex and imperfect characters, whose life is a mingled yarn of light and dark, of good and evil. No 'faultless monsters whom the world ne'er saw' are here, but men of like passions with ourselves, subject to our own weaknesses and infirmities, and often falling under our own temptations—but 'none righteous, no, not one.' We are not called on, therefore, to blindly follow and admire the example of any actor in this moving drama, but are left to discern their weak points for ourselves, and to take warning from their errors. As Bishop Christopher Wordsworth judiciously remarks, 'The weaknesses of the patriarchs strengthen our faith in the Pentateuch.' I propose in the present paper to consider one particular weakness, which was common to all these early patriarchs—a congenital weakness, it would seem, from its cropping up so frequently.

We begin with Abraham. Man of faith as he was, in his journeying about from land to land he appears to have gone in constant fear that the possession of so fair a wife as Sarah might involve him in trouble, or even endanger his life (Gen. xx. 13). His customary device, we are told, was to pass her off as his sister. This was so far true, that she actually was his half-sister, or perhaps his niece; but what he wished to have believed was that she stood to him in no closer relation, not recognising

'That a lie which is half a truth is ever the blackest of lies;
That a lie which is all a lie may be met and fought with outright,
But a lie which is part a truth is a harder matter to fight.'*

He dreaded that the King of the country to which he came might covet his neighbour's wife, and, with the lax morality of the time, appropriate her to be a member of his harem. That, strange to say, it seems he could have borne with. But the potentate might even proceed to worse than this—to slay the husband as an inconvenient obstacle to his wishes. With something of the same moral cowardice as weakened Simon Peter, he therefore protested, 'I know not the woman' (as a wife), 'I am but her brother.' Accordingly, on entering into Egypt, he said unto Sarah his wife, 'Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: and it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and that my soul may live, because of thee' (Gen. xii. 11-13). And so it did come to pass. Pharaoh took Sarah into his palace, and heaped favours on Abraham for her sake, and enriched him. However we look at it, Abraham, it must be confessed, played here a sorry part. It was a cowardly prevarication and equivocation thus complacently to allow his wife to be dishonoured, under the pretence that she was not his wife, in order that no harm might happen to himself. We cannot but sympathise with the natural indignation with which Pharaoh reproaches Abraham when he

* Tennyson, 'The Grandmother,' viii.

discovers the deception that had been practised on him: 'What is this that thou hast done unto me? Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so that I took her to be my wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way' (Gen. xii. 18, 19).

One would have expected that after this humiliating reproof at the hands of a heathen Abraham would have been cured of his duplicity, and would be careful not to fall into the same sin of premeditated falsehood again. But, alas! our nature is such that the sin which we have once committed we easily slip into again when the same temptation occurs, just as a folded sheet of paper naturally takes the ply where once a crease was made, and thus the repeated sin becomes a besetting sin. So it was with Abraham. This vice of shifty equivocation for selfish ends seems to have been engrained in his character. For when he visits the land of Gerar some years afterwards, and similar circumstances arise, he again pursues the same course. He gives out that Sarah is his sister; and Abimelech, the King, consequently takes her into his house. Warned of the true state of the case, he thus exonerates himself, 'Said he not himself unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and the innocency of my hands have I done this' (Gen. xx. 5). And he said unto Abraham, 'What hast thou done unto us? and wherein have I sinned against thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? Thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done' (verse 9). Thus, a second time Sarah was given up to dishonour, and once

more the heathen King, more righteous than Abraham, overwhelms him with a just rebuke. It is sad and surprising to find a Bishop of our Church following an ancient Father in suggesting, in mitigation of his conduct, that 'perhaps he thought that God had not disapproved that artifice in Egypt, and that He would bless it with similar success; he would therefore trust Him again; and in this respect this act of Abraham has been regarded by some as an act of faith in God.' Shall a man, then, lie for God, and help on His providence by falsehood? Shall he do evil that good may come? If we are constrained to pass a harsh judgment on a good man, it is because the Bible itself supplies the material for such judgment, and suggests it by the candour of its statements.

'His angels He chargeth with folly [imperfection]:
How much more them that dwell in houses of clay!'*

'He putteth no trust in His saints.'†

It is often and truly said that we must not judge men in those early times by the standard of our Christian light and knowledge; but the Bible story here brings Abraham's conduct into contrast with that of his *heathen* contemporaries, and by implication plainly condemns it as falling short even of *that*.

Why do I call attention to this marked failing in the character of Abraham? Is it merely to depreciate and vilify this ancient patriarch, who had many sterling and compensating virtues, which qualified him to be the forefather of a great people? No, my object is very different. It is to draw instruction from the noticeable

* Job iv. 18, 19. † Job xv. 15.

fact that this moral weakness, this want of veracity, which began in him, was transmitted to his posterity, and became hereditary in his family, and was the cause of their continued unhappiness from generation to generation. Abraham has passed away, and Isaac has taken his place, and we find the history repeating itself with curious fidelity. Like his father, 'Isaac dwelt in Gerar: and the men of the place asked him of his wife; and he said, She is my sister: for he feared to say My wife, lest, said he, the men of the place should kill me for Rebekah; because she was fair to look upon' (Gen. xxvi. 7). It was only by Abimelech discovering the falsehood in time that he narrowly escaped being betrayed into the same guilt as his predecessor. And here again the offended heathen has to read the abashed Hebrew a lecture on the elements of morality.

Perhaps he justified himself by the example of Abraham; at all events, we see the sin of the father coming to light again in the sin of the son—that principle of heredity at work by which the weakness of Abraham is faithfully reproduced in his son Isaac, and by him handed on to his son Jacob. And we see Isaac habituating his wife Rebekah to the use of duplicity and subterfuge, arts which she afterwards played off against himself with such fatal effect, when she deceived him on his sick-bed in the matter of Jacob.

These failings of Abraham and Isaac seem, in either case, to have been due to their timidity—simple want of courage. Their sin was committed in order to escape certain risks to themselves which they feared as imminent. In most cases, probably, want of truthfulness springs from this weakness of timidity. People tell a

lie to escape certain unpleasant consequences, because they have not courage to brave the punishment or to face the reproach or bad opinion which telling the truth would bring on them.

Now, it is an interesting psychological study to notice that the same moral weakness was the besetting sin of Jacob also. It was the shiftiness born of timidity that involved him in all the troubles of his life. He gains his ends by craft and crooked ways. He does not scruple to act a lie if it will advance his objects. It was this characteristic which got him his name of Jacob, or 'supplanter,' for it is by supplanting others selfishly that he aggrandises himself. By taking advantage of Esau's hunger and hasty disposition he overreached him and filched his birthright. By pretending that he was the first-born, he deceived his poor blind old father, and stole the blessing which rightly belonged to Esau, his elder brother. By a cunning trick played on his uncle Laban he managed to enlarge his own flocks and possessions. Thus, by repeated frauds he does not scruple to advance his own ends. But sin, like a boomerang, though it may seem to fly away into space, often makes a wide détour, and comes back upon its prime mover, it may be, with a deadly stroke.

Time again passes, and Jacob, in advanced life, has become the father of twelve sons. And here again, in this third generation, we find the same vice of deceit and fraudulent dealing cropping up once more. As we say, 'it runs in the family.' In the thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis we read how the sons of Jacob seized their brother Joseph, and through envy and jealousy sold him into slavery. Then, to hide their guilt, they

took the well-known coat, which Jacob had made for his favourite son, and stained it with the blood of a kid; and pretending that they had found it so, and that some wild beast must have devoured him, they brought this false testimony to their father. And Jacob, the deceiver, was completely deceived by the trick. 'He knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces. And Jacob rent his garments, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days' (Gen. xxxvii. 33, 34). And then, we are told, 'all his sons rose up to comfort him' (verse 35)—I suppose with pious platitudes, such as, 'God's will must be done.' They stab the old man to the heart, and then try to *comfort* him! Mark that touch of cant and hypocrisy. They cover over their own wickedness with a *show* of deep concern and sympathy—in reality, with lying and hypocrisy. Just as Jacob himself, in the days of his youth, had practised a cruel deception on his aged father Isaac, by means of Esau's coat and the skin of a kid, which he put on to personate his elder brother, so now when he is old a like deception is put upon himself by his sons, and that, too, by a coat which belonged to Joseph, and the blood of a kid. 'Wherewithal a man sinneth, by the same also shall he be punished.' This lie, told to Jacob by his own children, and kept up for long years, made his whole future mournful, down to old age. He was never comforted for the supposed death of his beloved Joseph. His life was embittered by falsehood. So fearful is the power of heredity, working like a taint in the blood. Like father, like son. We see this family failing descending from

generation to generation—the lie of Abraham reproduced in the lie of Isaac, intensified in the lie of Jacob, multiplied in the lie of the twelve patriarchs. And we cannot suppose that it ended with them. The baneful inheritance was, no doubt, transmitted to their children after them, and became characteristic of the race. The hereditary disease of falsehood vitiated the national life, and made the word 'Jew' a byword for sharp dealing and trickery. Shylock and Marlowe's Machiavellian Jew of Malta are in literature late representatives of the stock. We observe the same principle of heredity receiving striking illustration in the family of David, where the besetting sin was lust and bloodshed. David's lamentable fall in the matter of Uriah's wife, whom he led into adultery, and whose husband he killed, was grievously punished by the recrudescence of the same sins in his own house. He was scourged by a whip of his own making, by seeing his own sins reproduced in his own sons—foul fornication in one, murder and adultery in another, rebellion in a third, deceit and dissimulation in all. It was the natural retribution of heredity, which visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation, which began when fallen Adam begat a son in his own likeness, in his own warped nature. The physical consequences of sin, and evil tendencies to sin, are indeed transmitted from parent to child, but not the guilt of sin. Here the Mosaic Law lays down the just rule: 'The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin' (Deut. xxiv. 16).

Heredity, in fact, is but the modern name for the old biological law that 'Like begets its like.'

'The offspring of good men themselves are good;
Those of the base are like their fathers, base.'*

''Tis of the brave and good alone
That good and brave men are the seed;
The virtues which their sires have shown
Are found in steer and steed;
Nor do the eagles fierce the gentle ring-dove breed.'†

'Cowards father cowards, and base things sire base.'‡

Browning exhibits the working of this persistent continuity in one of the most painful of his poems, in which he represents two rough, savage men, of brutal temper, living together in the one homestead—the father an old man of seventy, the son of middle age. 'Last of their line, the wildest and worst were these.'

'One Christmas night of snow
Came father and son to words—such words!'

Presently the younger springs at the throat of the elder, seizes him, and drags him from the hearth to the door, intending to cast him out into the snow. A yard from the door-sill the wretched father faces his son with slow remorseful words:

'Hob, on just such a night of a Christmas long ago,
For such a cause, with such a gesture, did *I* drag—so—
My father down thus far; but, softening here, I heard
A voice in my heart, and stopped: you wait for an outer word.

'For your own sake, not mine, soften you too! Untrod
Leave this last step we reach, nor brave the finger of God!
I dared not pass its lifting: I did well. I nor blame
Nor praise you. *I* stopped here; and, Hob, do *you* the same!'§

* Euripides, 'Frag. Alcm.,' 7.
† Horace, 'Odes,' IV. iv. 29-31 (Martin).
‡ Shakespeare, 'Cymbeline,' IV. ii. 27.
§ 'Halbert and Hob.'

The practical bearing of this subject on our own life and conduct hardly needs to be insisted on. No one liveth only to himself; and even when he dieth, no one dies unto himself alone. The evil that he has done lives after him, and the good, happily, is not always interred with his bones. If, to a large extent, what our ancestors have been makes us what we are, it is equally true that what we are will help to make our children what they will be. This is the element of truth in the Buddhist's *karma*, 'the thing done,' which lives on for ever, though the doer passes away. 'The dead rule the living' is a profound saying, but is it not as true to say that those now living rule posterity through their children? You leave for good or evil indelible marks on the universe.

We see the child inheriting the features, the complexion, the voice, little tricks and ways, of his parent, and also the qualities and tendencies of his parent—his temper, his spirit, his courage, or his gentleness. This law on its darker side we call 'original sin,' the inherited propensity to go wrong and do evil. From our predecessors who sinned we inherit a tendency to sin as they did. Self-will, evil inclinations, base passions, corrupt desires—these come to us by natural inheritance; in us like buried seeds, which only require the fostering heat of temptation and opportunity, to break out into visible deeds of violence, licentiousness, self-indulgence, with all their bitter fruit. And thus the results of one generation's life are made manifest in the next. What we sow now will be reaped by others hereafter. This solemn thought, that they are doing a deadly wrong to those coming after them, may exercise

a restraining influence over some who would not scruple, perhaps, to risk their own moral life, thinking with Job, 'Be it indeed that I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself' (Job xix. 4). It does not remain so. A generation yet unborn will rise up either to bless or curse their memory for the inheritance they have bequeathed to it.

Have you noticed in that wise and comprehensive little treatise, the Church Catechism, how, among other duties towards our neighbour, it includes one which we might at first suppose did not concern him at all, 'keeping our body in temperance, soberness and chastity'? That, we might think, is a personal matter for the individual—a duty to himself. But the Catechism is profoundly right. Self-control is a duty to one's neighbour who is near in kinship. And the nearer he comes in kindred or affinity the closer is the bond of influence. It is closest of all in that nearest neighbour, one's child. Each man's body is a link in the physical chain by which he is connected with his forebears and with his children. Through his body he transmits his own physical qualities—nay, his own moral qualities—to a line of successors which stretches away into the unknown, distant future. Sins against the body, therefore, are social sins, sins against the community. It is our bounden duty to pass on to others, if possible, a pure and healthy frame—a pure and healthy soul. And all the more if it has been our happy lot to have inherited such ourselves, we must see that we do not depreciate what is the property of the family and the race, so as to be debtors to no man. If, on the other hand, we find that our own physical

inheritance has come to us impaired and embarrassed by the errors and misconduct of our forefathers, we must only strive to do what we may to improve our tenancy, to repair the damages of the estate, and, by cultivating the virtues of self-control, temperance, and purity, to insure that our children's birthright shall be better than our own. Let us remember that when we boldly speak the truth, exercise patience, subdue our bad temper, bear our ills cheerfully, act kindly and lovingly, we are not only bettering ourselves, but bettering those who shall be born in our likeness. We shall be making it easier for those who come after us to be good and truthful, to live soberly, righteously and godly in the world. The coming race will be what this generation helped to make it. We are passing on ourselves, and the world fifty years hence will be the better or worse for us here to-day. To that extent we can regenerate and shape the coming age. The doctrine of heredity tells us that we have no right to marry and have children unless we have trained ourselves beforehand for the responsibility of their birth. Let them not have to say, 'We are no better than our fathers.' We are handicapped and crippled by the evil tendencies, and bad habits, and weak constitutions, which they transmitted to us.

'The dead abide with us! Though stark and cold
Earth seems to grip them, they are with us still.
They have forged our chains of being for good or ill;
And their invisible hands these hands yet hold.
Our perishable bodies are the mould
In which their strong imperishable will—
Mortality's deep yearning to fulfil—
Hath grown incorporate through dim time untold.

'Vibrations infinite of life in death,
As a star's travelling light survives the star!
So may we hold our lives, that when we are
The fate of those who then will draw this breath,
They shall not drag us to their judgment-bar,
And curse the heritage which we bequeath.'*

Lowell puts the case of hereditary bias in a lively way, but with sober truth, when he says: 'No man can look into the title deeds of what may be called his personal estate, his faculties, his predilections, his failings—whatever, in fact, sets him apart as a capital I—without something like a shock of dread to find how much of him is held in mortmain by those who, though long ago mouldered away to dust, are yet fatally alive and active in him for good or evil. What is true of individual men is true also of races, and the prevailing belief in a nation as to the origin of certain of its characteristics has something of the same basis in facts of observation as the village estimate of the traits of particular families.'†

It is quite possible that the reader may have some good grounds of complaint against his forebears (which word, by the way, is only 'fore-be-ers,' those who have been before us, not those who formerly bore us, as Professor Skeat has shown). He was perhaps, metaphorically, born in bankruptcy, heir to a sorely encumbered estate. His fathers by folly or depraved appetite ate sour grapes, and he finds his teeth, which never touched such unwholesome fruit, are still set on edge (Jer. xxxi. 29). His grandfather, it may be, imbibed too freely from the family cellar, and unmerited

* Mathilde Blind.
† Lowell, 'My Study Windows,' 4th ed., p. 183.

gout reminds him of the fact. In some way or other his parents' improvidence or self-indulgence have bequeathed him a troublesome legacy, which, if he could have renounced it, he perhaps would never have accepted—some fleshly craving, an excitable temperament, invincible laziness, a violent temper, a sluggish brain, enfeebled nerves, a disordered stomach, perhaps even some congenital malady or suffering. There is no use chafing against a burden which clings so closely and is now inevitable. He must bear it without murmuring, as he does other disadvantages of his earthly lot. God knows the drawbacks of your inherited difficulties, reader, and will take them into just account when He comes to weigh you. Your peculiar burden, as part of your discipline, makes it harder in some ways for you than for another to walk straight and truly. It may lay trouble and temptation on you, but it does not entail *sin*. Jacob may have had a propension to lie because his fathers did, but was under no necessity to do so. A distinction must be made here. When 'children bear the iniquities of their fathers,' in Scripture phrase, it means they receive tendencies and sufferings from them, but not hereditary guilt. No man can justly be held *accountable* for another's crime, though we know by too common experience he is often injured in mind, body, or estate by others' misdoing. We may have to *suffer* for a sin that is not our own, but not to *answer* except for our own. Only when the 'original sin'—the diffused evil—takes shape and actuality, and comes to a head in some definite individual wrong-doing of our own, are we held guilty. It was a misrepresentation of the Jews of the Captivity on this head that incurred

the Lord's rebuke, when they complained that their fathers had sinned, and they were punished, and that therefore 'the way of the Lord is not equal'—*i.e.*, not fair and just (Ezek. xviii.).

A similar error is often made still. It is very generally assumed that the law of heredity works always to our disadvantage, to involve us in difficulty, trouble, and sin. But surely there is another side to the question, which is frequently lost sight of. It cuts both ways.

Each one of us, as we know if we look back for three generations, encounters eight great-grandparents, all of whom contributed to the making of his individual self, and who are all represented by equal right in the same little body politic of man. It is hard luck if some two or three, at least, out of that double quartet were not good, wise, well-conditioned, God-fearing persons. It is true, suppose, that I had a frivolous and libertine old grandfather who adorned the service of His Majesty George IV.; he contributed, I fear, no elements of good to the making of me. But, then, his wife, my grandmother, was a gentle, placid, sweet-tempered old lady, to whom I am under great obligations for my own imperturbability. A merry, light-hearted madcap paired off long ago with a grave and learned student, and the resultant of these divergent forces also meets in me. An irascible, hot-headed great-grandfather on one side was compensated and counteracted by a saintly, self-sacrificing great-grandmother on another side, who served as an antidote when these heterogeneous ingredients came together in me, their common descendant. Thus, when we come to estimate our

advantages and natural good qualities—we generally know these pretty well—may it not be that we find that the patient, phlegmatic disposition with which (no thanks to us) we take our provocations was inherited straight from our excellent mother; and the energy and shrewdness in business, of which we are proud, came to us complete from our successful father? And, similarly, it may be found that our other virtues and tendencies to good, which we do not often hear laid to the account of heredity, though they may be the most conspicuous elements of our Christian character and the best part of the personal equipment for which we are admired and commended, were not by any means first acquired by ourselves as original possessions, but are merely a part of the goodly heritage which in God's providence descended to us from the good men and women who went before us, of whom we are the unworthy representatives. They were the pioneers of virtue, we the after-settlers on the occupied ground. 'Herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth; we have reaped that whereon we bestowed no labour' (St. John iv. 37). Others have sown—it may be to the Spirit, it may be to the flesh—and we have entered into their labours.

> 'Ah me! how seldom see we sons succeed
> Their father's praise, in prowess and great deed.
> Yet certes if the sire be ill inclin'd,
> His faults befall his sons by course of kind. . . .
> Brag of thy father's faults, they are thine own:
> Brag of his lands, if those be not foregone:
> Brag of thine own good deeds, for they are thine,
> More than his life, or lands, or golden line.'*

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*_Bishop Hall, 'Satires' (1597), bk. iv., sat. 3.

But even these, probably, are thine because they first were his.

Have we not here also an explanation of that curious combination of heterogeneous elements which are often found co-existing with puzzling contrariety in the little world of man? The same person is at once indolent and industrious, gentle and hot-tempered, refined and coarse, temperate and self-indulgent. To walk through this little private gallery of family portraits is to understand the mystery of personality, which is otherwise an inexplicable riddle. Our Romneys and Sir Joshuas, if we are fortunate enough to possess them, throw light on our 'hereditary genius' and 'natural descent' more convincingly than Galton and Darwin.

This 'original goodness' in the natural world, if it be admitted—as we trust it may—will serve to reconcile us somewhat to the unpopular dogma of 'original sin' in the sphere of religion. We thankfully remember that Jacob and his sons inherited the saving faith of Abraham and Isaac, as well as their unveracious weakness.

Original sin is only the theological presentment of the problem of heredity. All men being of one blood, the natural taint has spread through all. And we can see how this belief demands and necessitates as a complementary truth the doctrine of the Incarnation. If man is to have a sinless Redeemer, there must be a fresh beginning, a new Head, one exempted from the hereditary stain by being born out of the course of nature. The chain of corrupt descent must be broken, and a new link introduced which will cut off the old entail and become the starting-point of a new order. In other

words, there must be a Virgin Birth. The second Adam, the new man, who is to make all things new, was therefore conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. He was one with sinners in the human nature of unfallen Adam; separate from sinners in their sin, the alien, adventitious element of fallen Adam. Thus, He was the originator of a new line of descent, 'born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God' (St. John i. 13). By making them partakers of the Divine Nature He gives them power to become new creatures, who henceforth walk no more after the flesh, but after the Spirit, in newness of life. Generation is cancelled by Regeneration.

XIII

The Areopagite Mockers

'When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked.'—Acts xvii. 32.

St. Paul was addressing the most cultivated and intellectual people of antiquity on the most momentous of subjects—their relation to God their Maker here and hereafter. They listened to him with a fair amount of courtesy and patience till he told them that God had raised up One from the dead who should hereafter judge the world; then their patience gave way. When they heard of 'a resurrection of dead people'—so it runs in the Greek—some began to mock. We are told a few verses previously that they were rather attracted to the Apostle at first, because 'he brought certain strange things to their ears'; for the one object in life of this light-minded people, the Athenians, was to tell or to hear some new thing, or the newest thing out. Well, here was a new thing indeed, a new thing in the earth, that a dead man should rise out of the grave. It was too new and strange for them; they received the tidings with incredulity and ridicule. A doctrine which to others was power and wisdom to these Greeks was foolishness. For 'the natural [or animal] man receiveth

not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him' (1 Cor. ii. 14).

If ever there were men of this world who had their portion in this life, it was the Athenians. Keenly alive to the beauties and joys of the bright, sunny world in which they found themselves, they of set purpose put away as far as possible all gloomy thoughts of death and what was to follow death. They might welcome as an intellectual problem any speculation as to the future state which might stimulate their curiosity and philosophical inquiry; but when it was driven home to their hearts and consciences, as it was by St. Paul, as an ethical and constraining influence on their present life and conduct, it grated on their merely human susceptibilities. They resented it almost as an impertinence, and withdrew, with undisguised levity and scepticism, from a conference which had disappointed their expectations. In this, indeed, they only acted up to their character as one of themselves had already drawn it. 'The Athenians,' says Plato, 'when anyone would address them whom they think incompetent to advise them, however respectable, wealthy, and well-born he may be, do not permit him, but laugh him down, and make a tumult until either he retires of his own accord, overcome by the uproar, or the officers carry him out.'*

Such was the Apostle's treatment when they heard him speak of a resurrection. Certainly such an event had never come within their experience. But need they have mocked? That is the question I propose to examine in this essay. Was the idea of a dead person being recalled to life so utterly foreign to their minds

* 'Protagoras,' 319, c.

that they were justified in pouring contempt on the doctrine of the resurrection? Was it so strange and unknown to their own great writers that it should be dismissed with ridicule as an unheard-of paradox? I think St. Paul might have confuted and convicted them out of the mouths of some of their own greatest thinkers, and no doubt he would have done so if they would have borne with him a little longer. Just before in his speech he had turned his knowledge of their own poets to good account by an apt quotation, when he had said: 'You must not imagine that the God who made us is like those statues of marble, and silver, and gold, which I see you make to represent Him. No, indeed; He is rather akin to ourselves—to human beings whom He made in His own spiritual likeness.' He then clinches it with an appeal to their own literature: 'As certain of your own poets have said, "We are also His offspring"; and surely the Father must bear some resemblance to His child.'

The words which he quoted so pat and with such effect were from the works of a Greek poet, Aratus, who came from St. Paul's own native city of Tarsus, and one, therefore, that he would naturally be acquainted with. Indeed, we know that the Apostle spent some considerable time in retirement at Tarsus before he set out on the mission to the Gentiles to whom he was sent. Nothing is more likely than that he took full advantage of this quiet time of preparation to study the literary treasures of the Greeks and acquaint himself with the religious tenets which he would have to combat and confute. This he would have every opportunity of doing in a literary centre like Tarsus, because,

as a Greek writer informs us, 'the men of that place had such an enthusiasm for philosophy and all other encyclopædic learning that they surpassed even Athens and Alexandria, and any other place that could be mentioned in which there were schools of philosophy and literature.'*

In this St. Paul showed the tact and wisdom of the true missionary, who always seeks to occupy a ground common to himself and those whom he wishes to influence. As far as may be he goes over to the adversary and meets him more than halfway, if only thus he can bring him round to his own standpoint. And he reaped the benefit when he found himself face to face with the lettered frequenters of Areopagus. Instead of referring them to the Law and the Targums, of which they could know nothing, he takes their 'own poets' to witness for the truth which he advances, and gains favour for his strange doctrines by quoting their own esteemed writers, Aratus and Cleanthes. To the Greeks he is willing to become a Greek, that he might win some. 'Being crafty,' in the best sense, 'he would catch them with guile' (2 Cor. xii. 16).

Now, my present point is that the Apostle might also have fairly turned the tables on the Athenians, and have judged them out of their own mouth, when they were so sceptical about the possibility of a resurrection, and implied that such a thing was foreign to all their modes of thought and contradictory to all their preconceptions. He might have said to them—and perhaps he would have said, if only they had given him opportunity, and borne with him a little

* 'Strabo,' xiv. 77; Baumgarten, 'Apostolic History,' ii. 188.

longer—'Have ye never read what your own great poet, Euripides, wrote as touching this matter?' The interest of one of his most famous plays, the 'Alkêstis,' turns on the very fact of a resurrection—that one of the characters was brought back from the grave by the intervention of a Divine Being who was stronger than Death. This play I speak of was written about 500 years before St. Paul came to Athens, and it is so full of human interest and pathos, as well as religious surmising, that I may give here a short outline of its contents:

Admêtus, an ancient King of Pheræ, is doomed to die, but by a special favour of heaven he is permitted to find a substitute for himself if he can, one who will die in his stead that he may live. When all others decline the service, the only one who will consent to make such a tremendous sacrifice is his noble wife, Alkêstis. After taking a touching farewell of her husband and children, this devoted wife submits to death, and is carried to the grave. At this juncture, when all are mourning her sad fate, a new character enters on the scene: the divine hero, Hêraklês, arrives at the house to visit his friend. He is a kindly being of immense strength, which he is always ready to use for the help of man. Learning the untimely fate of Alkêstis, he determines that she shall not remain in the power of the grave; Death must give her up. He hastens to the tomb, and after a severe struggle rescues her from the grasp of the fell monster, Death. He brings her back to the palace, closely veiled, and hands her over to her delighted husband, Admêtus, who can hardly believe his eyes; and we are told that for three

days she was so far under the spell of the silent land that she could not speak.

Now, in this religious play, as I think we may truly call it, there are many indications how men, before Christ came, were groping after a truth which lay beyond the reaches of their souls. They had a feeling that there might conceivably be a love so true and strong that one might even dare to lay down his own life for his friend—a vicarious offering. One doomed to death might possibly be saved by another dying in his room. And this high presentiment, we know, was not false. It came to pass in very deed, and is now one of the great doctrines of the Christian faith. As St. Paul himself writes: 'When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commended His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (Rom. v. 6-8). Or, as the Divine Substitute Himself bears witness in the Gospel: 'I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.' 'I lay down My life for the sheep' (St. John x. 14, 15).

Nor is this the only germ of higher truth hidden in this heathen soil. The idea, not unknown to many Eastern nations, that the humiliation of a Divine Being to the common lot of humanity for a certain period might be essential to the welfare of the human race comes out in the opening of this play of 'Alkêstis.' Apollo, the god of light and of healing, the benefactor of man, who was also the revealer of the Divine counsels and the foe of Death, had humbled himself to take

service with Admêtus and to tend his flocks. The first lines spoken are given to this bright deity, who had become in the house of a mortal as one that served:

> 'Halls of Admêtus, where I deigned to live,
> God though I was, accepting menial fare.'

But even more conspicuously than these fore-gleams of the Incarnation and the Atonement the doctrine of the Resurrection was adumbrated in this remarkable work of the Greek poet. It distinctly contemplated the possibility that one given over to Death might yet be delivered from his sway and brought back from his gloomy realm to the warm precincts of the cheerful day. Since God had put eternity in the heart of man, he felt that he was not made for Death, but that this usurper would yet be conquered by a mightier power. So that old world cherished a dim hope that a Lord of Life should one day come as a Deliverer from Death, who would break the bands of Hades, and say: 'I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues. O grave, I will be thy destruction' (Hos. xiii. 14).

In another passage of the same drama Euripides makes direct reference to another demi-god who was conceived to have possessed the power of raising up the dead. The chorus in their lamentation over the doom of the ill-fated Queen exclaim: 'Inexorable Death draweth nigh. If only the son of Phœbus were here in the light of day, she might come forth and leave the dark abodes and gates of Hades. For he used to raise up the death-vanquished' (ll. 122-127). The Divine deliverer referred to is Æsculapius, the son of the life-giving sun-god, Apollo, and his customary title was

'the son of God.' As a kind of mediator or elder brother of humanity, he sympathised with men's sufferings, and not only healed their diseases, but even possessed the miraculous power of raising whom he would from the dead. When the martyred Socrates took off the deadly draught, which as a sovereign remedy cured him of a life which was death, and gave him the life indeed, he felt that he owed a thank-offering to Æsculapius for this great boon of awakening him to a higher existence. He therefore offered to that deity as the awakener of the dead to life everlasting the sacrifice of a cock*—the bird of the dawning day. The very word used in the 'Alkêstis' for 'he raised up' (*anistê*) the dead is the verb which yielded St. Paul's word for the Resurrection (*anastasis*) before the Areopagites. But the men who flocked with enthusiasm to Epidaurus, the popular shrine of Æsculapius, as healer and raiser of the dead, and who at a later day were eager to accept the resurrection miracles of Apollonius of Tyana—another man of Tarsus, and a disciple of Æsculapius—with singular inconsistency held St. Paul in derision when he told them of One who could cancel the cold bonds of death.

Not very different was the speculation of Euripides.†

* Plato, 'Phædo,' cap. 66; Dyer, 'Gods of Greece,' pp. 239-242.

† Mr. A. W. Verrall would fain persuade us that Euripides also was a mocker at the Resurrection, and that he introduces the doctrine only to discredit it ('Euripides the Rationalist,' pp. 107-128). If so, his covert scepticism has deceived all the critics for more than twenty centuries, who have found solemn teaching in the redemption of

> 'Alcestis from the grave,
> Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
> Rescued from death by force.'
>
> MILTON: *Sonnets*, xxiii.

He depicts the mighty Hêraklês thus resolving: 'I will watch beside the tomb for the black-robed King of the departed, Death. Lying in wait for him, I will rush forth, lay hold on him, throw my arms round him, and wrestle till he surrenders his prey. Or, if I find him not there, I will go down to the sunless halls of the lower region, and bring her back to the upper world, and restore her to her husband's arms.' And when Admêtus sadly objects, 'It is not possible that the dead should return to life,' the hero answers: 'Such power is mine that I can bring back thy wife from the abodes of the departed to the light of day.' And he makes good his promise, to the astonishment of the grieving husband. And this colloquy takes place between the two:

'O son of mighty Jove, how didst thou bring her back from below to this fair light of day?'
'By joining battle with the King of spirits.'
'And where, sayest thou, didst thou wage this conflict with Death?'
'Beside the very grave I seized him with my hands,
[And forced him to let his captive go.]
And in this victory of mine thou also art victorious with me.'

He conquered Death for the sake of others.

If the Athenians knew of this glorious speculation, as they might well have known, they surely need not have mocked, as they did, when St. Paul spoke to them of Jesus and the Resurrection. The soul of man, naturally Christian, had anticipated some such victory. In their own books they might have found this remarkable presentiment of a resurrection, of a Divine Champion who should one day appear on earth and vanquish Death on his own field, and let his prisoners go.

This, as we know, Jesus did when out of pity for mankind He gave battle to Death. And even though in the conflict He let Himself be thrown by that mighty antagonist, He soon broke His barriers, and 'on the third day He rose again from the dead,' bringing some of His people with Him. Just as it was felt by the Greeks of old that the cycle of the labours of Hercules was not complete until he had tried a bout with Death and got the better of him, and that he must crown all his other achievements with a victory over that King of Terrors, so it was reserved for the Divine Champion of men that, after all His minor victories, in which (out of pure sympathy) He gave back an only child to her sorrowing parents, an only son to his weeping mother, an only brother to his bereaved sisters, He should consummate all by His own personal victory over the last enemy on Easter morning. Then, by one significant action, He rolled back the door of the sepulchre and peopled its cold darkness with radiant angels.

Thus, we see that men in all times have hoped for deliverance from Death. They dreamt in their poetic visions of a coming Deliverer, whom they knew not yet, but the future should reveal. Men have ever protested and rebelled against the tyranny of Death as a foul usurper, and found it hard to believe in its necessity. We still find it most difficult ourselves; we cannot realise it as natural and inevitable that Death should ever touch ourselves or our dear ones. When they are taken from us, how hardly we can believe that they are gone! 'It is only by repeated efforts that we can realise to ourselves that it indeed is so. How we have

to say again and again to hearts half incredulous still, that it will never again in this world be otherwise—that so much truth and faith and love have indeed been withdrawn from hence and for ever! Thus earnestly does the spirit of man protest even against the semblance of annihilation which death seemed to wear.'* We almost fancy ourselves still conscious of 'the touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that is still.' In our more reflective moments, no doubt, we are conscious of our insecurity.

> 'We must die—
> We too. All passes, and must pass away;
> There's nothing certain in man's life but this,
> That he must lose it. Every hour's a thief,
> And all the world's unstable. Who's assured
> The sun will rise to-morrow? Each man stands
> Poised on this little pinnacle of Time,
> The ever-crumbling moment, eminent
> In midst of such innumerable mischance,
> That nothing is, or is conceivable,
> Of strength or size so insignificant,
> But what it may upset him. None is safe,
> Sleeping or waking; and between us all
> And what shall be the end of us at last,
> There's nothing but our ignorance of it. †

But it is only by an effort we realise this. Ordinarily and naturally we are all incredulous about death and destruction—far more than about endless life and resurrection. If any were to declare to us that death and annihilation is the right and the natural portion assigned to man, it is *he* rather than the herald of good tidings that would seem to us as one that mocked. We would not readily give him credence:

* Trench, Hulsean Lectures, 1846, p. 38.
† Lord R. Lytton, 'Clytemnestra.'

> 'Whatever crazy sorrow saith,
> No life that breathes with human breath
> Has ever truly longed for death.
> 'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,
> Oh, life, not death, for which we pant;
> More life, and fuller, that we want.'

We believe ourselves to be immortal. We feel that death is the sad anomaly and breach of the world's Divine order; that it need not have been, that it ought not to be, and that it will not be when God's kingdom is come, and 'death is swallowed up in victory.'

XIV

God a Fire

'Our God is a consuming fire.'—Heb. xii. 29.

There is something in the very sound of these words which makes the heart meditate terror. They have often been used by the preacher to rouse men out of their drowsy indifference, and frighten them out of their sins by showing them how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. They are indeed words infinitely solemn and awe-inspiring, however we may take them, even though it should appear that they have often been warped from their truest meaning by popular misunderstandings.

The first thought suggested to many minds on reading the passage is a vague idea that they must refer to what is called 'hell-fire,' and that to fall into the hands of the living God is equivalent to falling into that unquenchable fire in which the wicked are to be punished. Obviously, any interpretation of this kind, which identifies God with hell, must on the face of it be wrong, unless, indeed, we reconstruct and restate our current ideas about hell, which may be very necessary.

There is another statement, more magisterial and authoritative, and enouncing the central truth of the

Gospel, with which this subordinate utterance must be made to square and harmonise—the great dictum that 'God is Love' (1 St. John iv. 8, 16). God can only be a consuming fire in some sense which is not inconsistent with His being Perfect Love; because Love is an *essential* quality of His Divine Nature, which cannot, even in thought, be separated from Him: it is His very self.

Many other passages of Scripture besides this represent the Almighty as a fire which consumes what it kindles upon, or devours that which becomes its prey. In perplexity and distress we ask, How can this harsh figure be a true symbol of the gracious Father of the spirits of all flesh?

What is there more agonising and repellent than fire? It is one of the dangerous things we are first taught to shrink from in our childhood, as bringing pain and destruction. And who is there so kind and loving as He who is the first object of our childish love? How, then, can we give our love and worship to a God who is 'a consuming fire'? 'Who can dwell with the devouring fire, who can dwell with everlasting burnings?' (Is. xxxiii. 14). It was not the God of Israel, but a cruel, bloodthirsty idol, of whom it was said that the children 'shall pass through the fire' to reach him.

All that we know of God as He declares Himself in this fair world, all the truest instincts of our own hearts, the whole tenor of the revelation He gives of Himself in the Bible, forbid us to think of Him as essentially a fierce destroyer, whose deadly burning power we must try to escape from; they encourage us rather to approach Him with confidence as the Perfect

Love who imparts life and gladness and blessing to His creatures. How can *He* possibly be 'a consuming fire'?

Kuenen and others have made it probable that in the earliest times, when the Hebrews were only struggling out of the twilight of heathenism, they conceived the nature of Jahveh (Jehovah) to be akin to the great elemental powers, and fire in particular was thought to be the phenomenal symbol of His presence, and the appropriate vehicle of His manifestation (*e.g.*, Gen. xv. 17; Exod. iii. 2; Deut. ix. 3; Dan. vii. 10; Amos v. 6; Is. x. 17, etc.). 'The sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the mount' (Exod. xxiv. 17), and His voice was heard 'out of the midst of the fire' (Deut. v. 23-25). It was above all and distinctively the emblem of God as the Holy One who must purify all with whom He comes into relation, and with burning zeal consumes hostile and withstanding influences. That mysterious element, like a living thing which supports itself by devouring, at once life-giving and death-dealing, is a symbol of God in a twofold aspect. Its meaning depends on its correlation, being one thing to the righteous and law-abiding, another to the opposer and evil-doer. Its genial, steady glow of warmth may break out into an active blaze if it meets resistance (*e.g.*, Jer. xvii. 4; Mal. iv. 1; 2 Thess. i. 8).

The same element may yield comfort or pain, health or disease, according to the nature which it encounters and the reception which it meets. The sun which softens and melts the wax of the modeller bakes the clay of the potter into increased hardness. The same

heat which draws forth the fragrant beauty of the spotless lily draws up also the foul miasma of the marsh. The cause is one—the effect how different! And the same fire which diffuses a pleasant temperature and brightness round our room as it burns quietly in the grate produces noise and commotion, with clouds of hissing steam and fetid vapour, if it is brought into contact with the antagonistic element of water.

But, as the general result of our experience, we recognise that man is given in fire a useful servant and a kindly friend, though it may be turned by carelessness and misuse into a severe master and a destructive enemy. We welcome it in our homes as a presence full of comfort, and we extend our benumbed hands over its genial warmth with pleasurable feelings. Blazing in our kitchen ranges and ovens, it prepares for us our daily food, an indispensable minister to our sustenance. There is no blessing that the cold and starving poor covet more longingly than that of fire. But it burns only by destroying. It disintegrates and reduces to its component elements the wood and coal that it wraps round with its beautiful robe of lambent flame. It is a keen searcher and dissolver of all that comes under its influence. And yet it imparts life to what it kindles on. The dead black mineral it transforms into a *live* coal. All that is noisome and offensive it converts into white, pure ashes. In the world of nature its destructive work is the efficient cause of untold blessings. In one way or another it lies at the root of all our progress in manufacture and civilisation. This consideration may help us to understand in what sense God is a consuming fire. The symbol proclaims

Him to be inexpressibly pure and glorious, but our Friend rather than our Enemy.

We read in Exod. xx. 5, 'I, the Lord thy God, am *a jealous* God.' What is meant there by 'a jealous God'? We are so familiar with the words, from hearing them read every Sunday in the second commandment, that, I fear, we seldom pause to ask ourselves what they signify. The obvious meaning is that Jehovah, the only God, will not tolerate a rival—He will not allow the honour and worship which are due to Himself alone to be given to another, or shared with another. He is 'jealous'—*i.e.*, angry and indignant—if He is thus wronged; for He claims to be loved with all the heart, and all the soul, and all the strength—freely and heartily, not grudgingly or of necessity (*cf.* Josh. xxii. 19, 20). But the word in the original has a more precise and definite meaning. It implies that God's nature is like that of fire—intense, vehement, and glowing in His affection. And it was, no doubt, to teach us this that in old times, when God would make His presence visible, He made this element His chariot. When He would send a deliverer to His people, it was in a flame of fire He appeared to Moses in the burning bush. When He came down upon Sinai, to make a fuller revelation of His will, the glory of the Lord was like a 'devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.' But even then it was not to consume them, but to give them a Law—to bless them, by turning them away every one from his iniquities. It is only against the sins by which men wrong their own souls that His fiery precepts are directed. Accordingly, when Moses came down from the

mount, and found the people flagrantly transgressing the first table of the Law just given, by worshipping the golden calf, the Lord's anger indeed waxed hot, and it consumed, not the idolaters, but the idol: it was burnt with fire. It was with express reference to this judgment that Moses said at a later day, 'Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which He made with you; and make you a graven image, in the form of anything which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee. For the Lord thy God is *a devouring fire, a jealous God* (Deut. iv. 23, 24). He reminds them also that when they 'heard His voice out of the midst of the fire,' they exclaimed in fear, 'This great fire will consume us' (Deut. v. 24, 25). These are the classical passages on which the verse in Hebrews is founded, and here we find the phrase 'God is a devouring *fire*,' defined and explained by the addition, 'He is a *jealous* God.' In the original the word for 'jealous' (Heb. *qannâ'*) is derived from a root (*qânâh*) 'to be red-hot,' and, being used for burning zeal, is almost synonymous with 'fiery.' The radical meaning is well preserved in our word 'jealous' (Ital. *geloso*), which is really identical with 'zealous'—*i.e.*, Lat. *zelosus*, full of zeal (Greek *zêlos*, boiling heat), originally ebullient from heat, and so ardent, fervent. Similarly, 'Cananite' (for *Qan'ân*) was the native synonym of Zelotes, the Greek byname of Simon the Apostle.* Indeed, the Vulgate rendering of Exod. xx. 5 is, 'I the Lord thy God am *zelotes*'—a zealot. Hence, St. Paul naturally uses the expression, 'I am zealous for you with God's zeal' (2 Cor. xi. 2).

* Compare the Hebrew names Uriel, 'Flame of God'; Urijah, 'Flame of Jehovah'; Hamuel, 'Heat of God.'

That the idea of fire was consciously felt to underlie the epithet of 'jealous,' so frequently given to God in the Old Testament, appears from the constant collocation of the two words.

The following passages, *e.g.*, when compared are instructive: 'Shall Thy *jealousy* (*qin'âh*) burn like *fire?*' (Ps. lxxix. 5). 'They shall see Thy *zeal* (*qin'âh*) for the people, and be ashamed; yea, *fire* shall devour Thine adversaries' (Is. xxvii. 11). 'All the earth shall be devoured with the *fire* of My *jealousy* (*qin'âh*)' (Zeph. iii. 8). 'A *jealousy of fire* (ζῆλος πυρὸς) shall devour the adversaries' (Heb. x. 27). The following, also, should be compared: Deut. xxix. 20; Ezek. xxxvi. 5, xxxviii. 19; Zeph. i. 18.

In what sense 'God is a consuming fire' may be understood from a consideration of this word 'jealousy.' It expresses that ardent feeling which may turn either into love or anger, but cannot be merely indifferent, which rejects with loathing and holy impatience those who are 'lukewarm and are neither cold nor hot' (Rev. iii. 16, where *zestos*, the word for 'hot,' is near akin to 'zeal' and 'jealousy').* These two seemingly opposite feelings, the heat of anger and the warmth of love, are combined and reconciled in this characteristic attribute of the Holy God. As the Book of Proverbs defines it:

> 'Jealousy (*qin'âh*) is the heat [glowing anger] of a husband,
> And he spareth not in the day of vengeance.'†

* Origen, followed by Jerome, has a very curious chapter, in which he argues that the soul (*psychê*) of man, as etymologically meaning 'coldness,' must be the antithesis to the Divine warmth or fire, from which it has fallen away or cooled ('De Principiis,' ii., chap. viii.).

† Prov. vi. 34.

Anger is hard by love. They are only the reverse sides of the one strong and earnest affection, which, according to the response it meets with from its object, may blaze forth in righteous judgment or glow in fervent, vivifying love. Just as a cold and indifferent husband would never have exhibited the consuming jealousy of the noble Moor, which felt constrained to vindicate itself even by the tragic, but judicial, execution of his (supposed) faithless wife. In Othello is portrayed the natural but stern reaction of love despised, which still yearns tenderly over the beloved one, but cannot tolerate want of love. Similarly with God, His 'jealousy' is a mingled feeling of holy love and holy wrath, the affection of one 'merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, and that will by no means clear the guilty' (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7). Accordingly, He is said to be jealous, sometimes *for*, sometimes *against*, another, in proportion as that other is antagonistic or responsive. 'He hath His fire in Zion, and His furnace in Jerusalem' (Is. xxxi. 9), and this for the protection of His friends and the destruction of His enemies. And so we notice that the fire which descends from Him out of heaven wears a double aspect. In Lev. ix. 24, when it falls upon the sacrifice offered by faithful worshippers, to consume it, it is a sign of the favour with which He accepts it; but when, in immediate sequence (Lev. x. 2), it falls on the irreverent and disobedient priests Nadab and Abihu, and devours them, it is a manifest token of wrath and judgment. So the pillar of fire, which to His own people was a guiding light and a cheering symbol of His favour,

was to His enemies a dark, cloudy symbol of discouragement and defeat (Exod. xiii. 21, xl. 38).

Thus, the 'jealousy' of God tells us at once of His burning zeal and fiery indignation; that He is no lukewarm, indifferent Deity such as the Epicureans imagined—no *fainéant* ruler, but a 'living God' (Heb. x. 31), zealous, terribly in earnest, and not rashly to be trifled with. His love, which is warm and glowing, can flame out into anger if He is slighted and set at naught.

This mighty energy of Love, that craves for a full return, that wills above all things to be loved with an undivided heart, and demands it as an inalienable right, is expressed with striking force in a passage of the Song of Songs (viii. 6, 7):

> 'Love is strong as death;
> Jealousy is hard [unyielding] as Sheôl [the grave];
> Its flames are flames of fire,
> A very flame of Jah [Jehovah].
> Many waters cannot quench love,
> Neither can the floods drown it.'

Here we have a remarkable statement which removes all seeming antagonism between the two great definitions with which we started: 'God is a consuming fire,' and 'God is love.' We learn that the unquenchable fires of Jehovah are really the vehement flames of a love aroused to jealousy. 'We are helped to see how wrath is not merely a possibility, but a necessity, in a God who is Personal, and whose Being is essentially Love; and how His being a consuming fire, instead of proving that He has no Love, proves that His Love is of the mightiest strength and earnestness.'*

* S. D. F. Salmond, *Brit. and For. Rev.*, No. 77, p. 463.

Some of these thoughts, we might infer, were present to the mind of the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, from the fact of his using the suggestive language that He who is 'a consuming fire' is 'our God.' Not merely He 'with whom we have to do,' or to whom we must give account, but He who is bound to us by the ties of a covenant relation, so that we belong to Him and He belongs to us, and is bound to do what is best for us. Like a father pitying his own child, and as a loving father chastening his own son, so is He in inflicting punishment. All He does is for our truest profit. That possessive 'our' is surely an evidence of the warm interest, the close relation to Himself into which He has adopted the transgressor, as if He said: 'Because he is *mine* I must purify him, and not let him go unpunished;' or as He actually does say to Israel, 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth' *therefore I will punish you* for all your iniquities (Amos iii. 2). What He burns is His own, and dear to Him.

The primary reference of the words we are considering, as we have seen, was to the giving of the Law in fire to Moses upon Sinai, amid thunders, lightning, and earthquake. In the verses going before, the writer had spoken of the earth being shaken by the voice of God, and he explains this as signifying that all that was transient, temporary, and informed by no abiding principle, must necessarily be broken up and give place to something more durable. He applies this to the institutions and rites of the old Jewish dispensation, which had now done their work in the religious training of the people, and had become decayed and

outworn. These were only as the rungs of a ladder which was to be taken down when a higher level was reached. All these imperfect truths and provisional expedients have to be removed and give place at the coming of the permanent kingdom of Christ. 'For [he adds] our God is a consuming fire'—one that tries every work searchingly; nothing that is unstable, flimsy, and unsubstantial—still less anything that is false, imperfect, and impure—can abide the day of His coming and stand when He appeareth. And so in the words following he points out certain infirmities and sins of the flesh which this cleansing fire will never tolerate (Heb. xiii. 4, 5).

To sinners, as such, the pure God must be terrible, for His chastisements are inexpressibly severe. He can bring Himself to inflict pain, even the worst extremities of pain, on those whom He loves and longs to save. The fire which might warm and nurture the living can only burn and destroy the dead and worthless.

The question then comes ~~back~~: *What* is it that God's fire will consume? Is it the creatures whom He made, whose Father He is? No! All that Christ tells us of Him forbids the thought. He declares Himself that He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. He had no mission to call down fire from heaven to consume evil-doers (St. Luke ix. 54-56), but rather to seek and save that which was lost. He came, indeed, to destroy, but only the works of the devil, and death, and him that hath the power of death. We infer, then, with confidence that it is the sin He will consume, and not the sinner; the wickedness He will destroy, and not the wicked man. 'I know of a cleansing fire which Christ came to cast upon the earth, who Himself is

mystically called also a fire,' says St. Gregory Nazianzen. 'And the quality of this fire is to consume what is material and evil dispositions, which also He willeth to be kindled very quickly.'* Consequently, the words 'Our God is a consuming fire' are followed in immediate sequence by the precept, 'Let brotherly love continue.' Only love can meet love and disarm its 'jealousy.' Practical charity shown in righteousness and holiness of life will afford no fuel for the holy flame to kindle upon; it will quench the violence of the punitive fire which rages only against that which opposes it. 'For what will God "consume" in respect of His being "fire"?' asks Origen. 'Shall He be thought to consume material substance, as wood, or hay, or stubble? And what in this view can be called worthy of the glory of God, if He be a fire consuming materials of that kind? But let us reflect that God does indeed consume and utterly destroy; that He consumes evil thoughts, wicked actions, and sinful desires, when they find their way into the minds of believers.'† In the words of St. Bernard, 'Nothing burns in hell except our own self-will' ('Nihil ardet in inferno præter propriam voluntatem').

But how shall it be if, when the fire of Divine love kindles upon our sins and sinful habits, in order that they may be burnt off and leave us pure, we cling to them and will not let them go? Then we ourselves must feel the smart of the fire, as well as our sins, until we are glad to part with them. And if, alas! it ever should be that sin has become so deeply ingrained into our nature that it actually *cannot* be burnt out of us with-

* Orat. xl., n. 36. Pusey, 'What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment,' p. 212.

† See 'Contra Celsum,' iv. 13; 'De Principiis,' ii. x. 4.

out burning us up also; if men *will* to be evil, and will not be reformed; if they cleave still so closely to their sins that they can never be parted from them, either by mercies or chastisements or all God's gracious pleadings, what then? Then it may be that Love, from which they would accept no better boon, may be constrained to consume them out of His universe as an invincibly hostile element. For thus it is written: 'If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth . . . only a certain fearful looking for of judgment and jealousy of fire, which shall devour the adversaries' (Heb. x. 26, 27). And again: 'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting [æonian] destruction from the presence of the Lord' (2 Thess. i. 7-9; *cf.* Mal. iv. 1). Human freewill has this dreadful power of so far thwarting and limiting God's universal intentions (*supra*, pp. 122-129).

But in this world, at all events, God's anger is only another side of His love. He is jealous over us because He loves; and because He loves He punishes. 'Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord' (Ps. xciv. 12), and most unhappy he of whom Thou sayest, 'Let him alone.'

'Father and Lover of our souls!
Though darkly round Thine anger rolls,
Thy sunshine smiles beneath the gloom.
Thou seek'st to warn us, not confound;
Thy showers would pierce the harden'd ground,
And win it to give out its brightness and perfume.
Thou smil'st on us in wrath, and we,
Even in remorse, would smile on Thee.'*

* Keble, 'First Sunday after Christmas.'

It is instructive to note that the very word for 'consuming fire' in the Greek of this passage, *pûr* (πῦρ), is not only radically the same as our English word (A.S. *fyr*), but is near akin in root, as in sound, to the word 'pure,' Lat. *purus* (whence *purgo*, *pur-igo*, to cleanse). Thus, 'fire' is literally that which *purifies*, and the word when used of the nature of God tells us that it is so terribly and essentially pure that it cannot but war against and destroy all that is impure. It defines His burning love as assimilating everything, like fire, to its own perfect purity. A poet so scholarly as Dr. Faber was probably conscious of the verbal connection I have referred to when he thus expressed himself concerning purgatorial punishment:

> 'In pain beyond all earthly pains,
> Favourites of Jesus, there they lie,
> Letting the *fire purge* out their stains,
> And worshipping God's *purity*.'

Just as Byron had already said, that thence

> 'men may arise
> *Pure* from the *fire* to join the angelic race.'*

Like a great metallurgist, the Lord sits aloft as a refiner and purifier of silver, to purify the sons of men, and to purge them as gold and silver (Mal. iii. 3). Anyone who, ignorant of his art, saw a goldsmith cast his precious metal into the glare of the red-hot crucible might imagine that he valued it lightly and held it of little worth, whereas, in truth, he values it so highly that he wants to have it better. He exposes it to that

* 'Prophecy of Dante,' canto i.

fiery ordeal only that it may be cleansed from some hidden baseness, some impure alloy with which it had got mingled. All that is not pure and sterling metal the fire devours as if chaff. And it is said that the refiner knows that his object is attained when he is able to see his own face reflected in the little pool of glowing metal as in a mirror. And this is just what God desires when He submits us to the fiery trial—so to purify our nature that He may see His own likeness once more in us. In the characters of even the best of men there is something of this dross and defilement contracted in their way through the world. Their evil desires and evil habits must be burnt out, so that, baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, they may acquire that purity of heart which will enable them to see God. It is of His 'cleansing fires' that one thus sings:

'Let thy gold be cast in the furnace,
Thy red gold, precious and bright;
Do not fear the hungry fire
With its caverns of burning light;
And thy gold shall return more precious,
Free from every spot and stain;
For gold must be tried by fire,
As a heart must be tried by pain.'*

This important truth, that the sufferings which God inflicts are the result, not of His wrath, but of His love, is 'the heart of the Book of Job.' We learn that His punishments are a fire which consumes only to save us and enhance our value. Its pains and smarts, like a cherubic sword, warn us off from evil, and turn us back into the way of righteousness. He will not let us sin easily, for He will not easily let us perish. By His

* A. A. Procter, 'Poems,' i. 63.

chastening hand He makes the way of transgressors hard, smiting our vices out of us by His fiery rod, consuming our meanness, falsehood, and selfishness, until at last our ore, purged from its dross, becomes fine gold, in some measure fit for that heavenly city the very streets whereof are pure gold.

As soon as this solemn truth is recognised, and it is felt that God's consuming fire, which punishes our sins, is nothing else but a manifestation of His love, a faithful Christian will not regard the fiery trial as a strange and unaccountable thing (1 St. Pet. iv. 12). He will try to endure it patiently, and even count it all joy (St. Jas. i. 2). He will take it thankfully as a token of God's Fatherly kindness, and designed for his highest good.

In a sermon with the suggestive title 'The Wrath of Love,' Kingsley asks: 'Why should God, if He be just and merciful, punish my sin by pain and misery? How can it profit God, how can it please God, to give me pain?' And he gives this answer: 'Surely God punishes me to correct me and make me better. I punish my child because I love him and wish him good. God punishes me because He loves me and desires that I may be a partaker of His holiness.' This is the truth which the poor blasphemer, in Tennyson's terrible poem called 'Despair,' had not come to know, having been alienated from Christ by the popular teachings in which he had been brought up, of 'a hell without help, without end.'

'What! I should call on that Infinite Love that has served us so well?
Infinite cruelty, rather, that made everlasting Hell,

Made us, foreknew us, foredoomed us, and does what He will with His own! . . .
But the God of Love and of Hell together—they cannot be thought.'

They *can* be thought. Even Dante, with all his medieval theology, saw that the two apparently antagonistic ideas could, and must, be reconciled. Over the portal of the City of Pain—the Inferno—he conceived that these words were written:

'Fecemi la divina Potestate,
La somma Sapienza e 'l *primo Amore*.'*

'The Power Divine created me,
The highest Wisdom and the *primal Love*.'

The God of Love is one with the God of Wrath; Hell the dark reverse of Heaven. How Dante in his own mind harmonised this with those other words, 'All hope abandon, ye who enter here!' which he also found inscribed on that dread gate, it is more difficult to understand. With a truer and deeper insight into the mystery of suffering, he represents the spirits confined in purgatory, the place of cleansing, as desiring no respite or immediate deliverance from the appointed pain which is consuming their sins. They have no wish to have their punishment shortened, or to swerve aside one inch from the cleansing flame which is making them fit for the purity of God's presence.

'Desire of bliss is present from the first;
But strong propension hinders, to that wish
By the just ordinance of Heaven opposed;
Propension now as eager to fulfil
The allotted torment as erewhile to sin.'†

* 'Inferno,' iii. 5, 6.
† 'Purgatory' (Cary), xxi. 63-68.

One who is the very antipodes of medieval religionism here quite agrees. 'It is the best—perhaps the only—test of sincerity of repentance for past sins,' says Miss Cobbe, 'that we should be willing and glad to suffer their just expiation. If a man feel in dying that justice has not had its claims satisfied as regards him, that he has suffered very little and sinned a great deal, such a man ought undoubtedly to look forward with a solemn *rejoicing* to the fulfilment in another life of that Divine retribution which he adores. A stricter school and severer chastisement have nothing to dismay him. He feels that they would be right and in accordance with God's character; and the wish of his heart is that the right may be done, and God's perfect attributes maintained. This he must feel independently of the knowledge that the Divine retribution is also the Divine correction, and that the faults of his present disposition will be healed by such merciful medicine.'* This was the high aspiration of the early hymn-writer, Prudentius:

> 'Lux immensa alios et tempora vincta coronis
> Lætificent, me pœna levis clementer adurat.'†
>
> 'Let boundless light and temples girt with crowns
> Make others glad, but me let mercy cleanse
> With tempered flame.'

And to the same effect are the beautiful and often-quoted words of Coventry Patmore:

> 'Hearts that verily repent
> Are burdened with impunity
> And comforted by chastisement. . . .

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* F. P. Cobbe, 'Religious Duty,' p. 124.
† 'Hamartigeneia,' *sub fin.*

That penalty 's the best to bear
Which follows soonest on the sin;
And guilt's a game where losers fare
Better than those who seem to win.'*

The same sentiment had been expressed already by the writer of the second book of Maccabees in words which are curiously parallel: 'I beseech those who chance upon this book . . . that they judge those punishments not to be for destruction, but for a chastening of our nation. For it is a token of His great goodness, when wicked doers are not suffered any long time, but forthwith punished. For not as with other nations whom the Lord patiently forbeareth to punish, till they be come to the fulness of their sins, so dealeth He with us' (2 Macc. vi. 12-14). And at a later day by Justin Martyr: 'He must be reckoned the most unfortunate of men, who, while living unrighteously, remains for a long time unpunished.'† This ability to rejoice in tribulation is indeed a high attainment vouchsafed only to God's faithful servants; but we may see some adumbration of it in the case of the three Jewish youths who could sing His praises in the midst of the fiery furnace, and find the scorching flame turned for them into 'a moist whistling wind' (Dan. iii. 50, LXX.), as well as in the old Jewish and Mohammedan tradition that Abraham, when cast into the furnace for refusing to worship Nimrod's idols, found the fires intended to consume him as pleasant as a couch of flowers:

'Come, prove this fire; like water-floods it cools,
While your world's water burns like sulphur pools.

* 'Angel in the House,' p. 137.
† Ante-Nic. Lib., 'Writings of Justin Martyr,' p. 360.

Come, Abraham's secret, when he found alone
Sweet roses in the furnace, here is known.'*

A more historic instance is that of the martyrs Voes and Esche, who experienced this quenching of the power of fire (Heb. xi. 34) when brought to the stake at Brussels; as the flames mounted over his head, one of them cried out in his transport that 'he felt as if they were strewing him with roses.' While, on the other hand, in mournful contrast to this joyous transformation, the celestial roses which the choir of Angels in 'Faust' (Part II., v. 6) scatter down as symbols of the Divine Love, as they fall on the spirit of evil, are represented as changing their nature into flames which burn and blister the wretched Mephistopheles 'sharper than hell's red conflagration.' What to others was bliss to him was torture.

This, then, is how a faithful Christian will regard the consuming fire. He will say: 'I am glad I suffer for my faults; I would not, if I might, be bad and happy' (Bailey, 'Festus,' p. 212). 'Oh, what a punishment it is to have no punishment!' says St. Augustine; and elsewhere he offers the prayer, 'Cleanse me in this life, and render me such that I may no longer require the amending fire.'† Very similarly St. Gregory Nazianzen says of himself: 'Perchance I shall hereafter be moulded by another moulding, cleansed by the friendly fire';‡ and so the great Latin Father, St. Ambrose, in these affecting words: 'He who possesses here the fire of love will have no cause to fear there the fiery sword. But *he* shall be tried as silver, *I* as lead; *I shall burn till the*

* Trench, 'Life through Death': 'Poems,' p. 306.
† On Psalm xxxvii.
‡ 'De Seipso,' v. 496; Pusey, 'Eternal Punishment,' p. 110.

lead melts away. If no silver be found in me, ah me! I shall be plunged down into the lowest pit, or consumed entire as the stubble. Should aught of gold or silver be found in me, not for my works, but through the mercy and grace of Christ, by the ministry of the priesthood, I shall peradventure say, "They that hope in Thee shall not be ashamed." The fiery sword, then, shall consume iniquity, which is placed on the leaden scale.'* In language very similar, and breathing the same devout aspiration for the cleansing of the sanctifying flame, a modern saint, Charles Kingsley, thus poured out his heart: 'Thou requirest truth in the inward parts, and I will thank Thee for any means, however bitter, which Thou usest to make me true. I want to be an honest man and a right man. And, oh joy! *Thou* wantest me to be so also. Oh joy! that though I long, cowardly, to quench Thy fire I cannot do it. Purge us, therefore, O Lord, though it be with fire. Burn up the chaff of vanity and self-indulgence, of hasty prejudices, second-hand dogmas—husks which do not feed my soul, with which I cannot be content—and if there be any grains of wheat in me . . . gather it into Thy garner.'† What are these noble words but a realisation of Isaiah's vision of the holiness that should be found in the Holy City when the Lord 'shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the *spirit of burning?*' (iv. 4). In that high faith we may rejoice even in tribulation; we can understand what David meant, 'It is good for me that I was afflicted. Before I was

* On Psalm cxviii.: Sermon xx. 12-14; Pusey, *Op. cit.*, p. 109.
† 'Life of Charles Kingsley,' i. 395.

troubled I went wrong, but now have I kept Thy word.'

Come, therefore, O Lord, fan in hand, and throughly cleanse Thy threshing-floor. Come and burn up our chaff with unquenchable fire (St. Matt., iii. 12). Come, if need be, in Thy spirit of burning, and be to our worst enemies—even our own sins and wickedness—'a consuming fire.'

The words thus understood—as the saints in all times have understood them—speak not of never-ending, objectless suffering, but of remedial, hopeful, fruitful correction—'the valley of trouble a door of hope' (Hos. ii. 15). 'All the reasoning in the world,' says that large-hearted, kindly writer, Dr. Wendell Holmes, 'cannot reconcile this supposition of a world of sleepless and endless torment with the declaration that "God is love." '*

> 'While in my simple Gospel creed
> That "God is love," so plain I read,
> Shall dreams of heathen birth affright
> My pathway through the coming night?
> Ah, Lord of life, though spectres pale
> Fill with their threats the shadowy vale,
> With Thee my faltering steps to aid,
> How can I dare to be afraid?'†

It was a fine saying of Madame Guyon's, 'Pure love is the only eternal fire,' and hardly less fine this of Cardinal Newman's:

> 'Learn that the flame of the everlasting love
> Doth burn ere it transforms.'‡

Let us see further what some of the most thoughtful minds in modern times have believed on this momentous

* 'Over the Teacups,' p. 253. † *Ibid.*, p. 259.
‡ 'Dream of Gerontius,' § 4.

subject. 'The relation of God to man is an eternal one,' says Professor Lange of Bonn, 'and He will never remove from him. He cannot change His nature, but His nature is love, which has fixed upon its object from eternity. His love is as strong as hell and as death. Even when He punishes man and casts him down into hell, He manifests by the jealous zeal of His justice that He will not remove from him. And if the strongest and hardest words be uttered concerning the separation between God and man in his evil nature, if the eternity of punishment be spoken of, what else is said but that the punishments of hell are Divine and heavenly? Mutilated theological notions have certainly caused an arithmetical to take the place of a religious idea of eternity. But eternity as a religious idea is the infinite, the divine, in time itself. Only where God is is eternity. Hence the eternity of punishment is the consecration of punishment, in which God is present to the last in holiest concealment. But where He is present His whole self is there, even as love. God never removes from man.'* The same learned theologian says again: 'The justice of God is the eternal rule and form of His love. Hence it can never abolish His love, but only conceal it, and cause it to assume the appearance of its opposite [*i.e.*, fire]. God in His justice is angry with the sinner, but He does not hate Him. His wrath is but the zealous burning of a grieved love.'† The same thought has been expressed by another German divine, the profound analyst of human sin, Julius Müller: 'It is a necessary and truly Christian

* 'Life of Christ,' i. 28. † *Ibid.*, p. 30.

effort to trace all God's dealings with the world to *love* as their original source. Even God's wrath is in its ultimate essence love. Love itself is a "consuming fire" against all which is opposed to it—the very essence of good. Love would not be true to itself if it did not repudiate its opposite. The very fact that man can become the subject of Divine punishment implies the relation to God in which he stands—namely, that man is the object and aim of God's redeeming love.'* And such was the childlike assurance of our own William Blake:

> 'Though He is angry for a moment, He will not
> Utterly cast me away. . . .
> '. . . If I were holy, I never could behold the tears
> Of love of Him who loves me, in the midst of His anger, in furnace of fire.'†

The eloquent French preacher Guillaume Monod has this contemplation of the Last Judgment: 'The Judge of the world is the Lamb who taketh away the sin of the world; His wrath is the wrath of the Lamb. What more can we require? O my soul, be at rest, and await in peace the day of eternal vengeance. It is the day of Christ, and it is the vengeance of Christ. It is therefore a day of salvation, and its vengeance is that of love. Judge of the world, appear and smite Thy enemies: they will fall at Thy feet annihilated, annihilated by love; and in their stead will be found only Christians weeping for their crimes and for Thy griefs, and repeating with all the universe, "God is love."'‡

* 'The Christian Doctrine of Sin,' i. 248, 249.
† 'Jerusalem,' chap. iii.
‡ G. Monod, 'Le Jugement Dernier,' p. 28.

This is the central idea of Dr. Bailey's 'Festus':

> 'The love of God! Oh, it is infinite
> Even as our imperfection.'*
>
> 'Sin is the birth of evil; hell of sin;
> Destruction of corruption forms the end.
> Heat is not in the sun, nor wrath in God,
> Who, though our eye may waver, still is Love.
> It is the eye that twinkles, not the star.
> His ire is in ourselves. When Him we spurn
> We suffer: we both suffer and inflict.
> Revenge, wrath, judgment, all are names of Love.
> Such retribution is our God's—
> Such glorious retribution as the sun
> Inflicts on fogs and shadows. Hell is part
> Of Nature. Human retribution stands
> Divine in ordination; but Divine
> Judgment on human souls by torturing fires
> In everlasting blast, a blind reproach
> To the pure God who blesseth all He makes!'†

This assurance seems to be one element of truth in Swedenborg's vision of the nature of hell.

'The fire of hell,' he says, 'or infernal love, derives its existence from the same origin as the fire of heaven, or heavenly love. Both proceed from the Sun of heaven, which is the Lord, but the Divine efflux is made infernal by those who receive it' [*i.e.*, in the falsities of evil].‡

In this striking phrase, which sounds so strange and paradoxical, 'infernal love,' have we not revealed, indeed, the very heart of the mystery of the 'consuming fire'? It is that burning 'jealousy' of God in its various manifestation, on the one side as love, on the other side as anger.

At first sight, God would seem here to be divided

* 'Festus,' p. 211.
† *Ibid.*, p. 174.
‡ 'The Future Life,' ed. 1899, p. 242.

against Himself, drawing us *to* Him and driving us *from* Him.

Our sins had set His attributes at variance with regard to us, and arrayed the wrath of His jealousy against the love of His jealousy, so that, if we are pardoned, 'mercy rejoiceth *against* judgment.' It is only in Christ that these are atoned and reconciled, as says the Christmas Psalm: 'Mercy and Truth are met together; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other' (Ps. lxxxv. 10).

This is the meaning, doubtless, of that bold, transcendental flight of the Talmud (which incidentally seems to involve the doctrine of the Trinity), 'God prays!' And the subject of His prayer is, 'Be it My will that My mercy overpower My justice.'* Many of the Rabbis believed that the Holy One prays that His mercy may be revealed above His other attributes, in dealing with His children according to the quality of mercy.† We have here a curious anticipation of the profound conception of modern metaphysics, that in the Supreme Being His self is separate from His self—the self as subject being conscious of the self as object.

Such distinction of Persons in the Godhead appears to be adumbrated by the statement in Genesis that, when the fire of judgment fell in old time, it was rained down *by* the Lord *from* the Lord ('Dominus pluit a Domino,' Gen. xix. 24), as if two agents were engaged, according to the old saying, 'Nothing can withstand God except God Himself' ('Nemo contra Deum nisi Deus Ipse'). 'The only way to hide from

* Deutsch, 'Literary Remains,' p. 131.
† Hershon, 'Talmudic Comm. on Genesis,' p. 330.

God is to hide in God,' says Augustine. We take refuge from His hand in His heart; from His wrath in the bosom of His love; from the unseen God of Judgment in the same revealed as Jesus the loving Saviour. Thus, even Job can appeal from God to God, that His love may intervene between man and His wrath:

> 'Mine eyes pour forth tears to God,
> That He may decide for man against God.'*

Just as the stormy ocean, which outwardly is agitated in tumultuous billows, at its heart is profoundly still; as the whirling cyclone, which in the outward sweep of its circumference deals death and devastation, is at its centre perfectly calm and peaceful, so we may 'flee from Himself to Himself; from the rigour of His justice to the bosom of His mercy' (Hugo de St. Victor)—from Him whom our sins made to be a God of wrath to Him who is our loving and reconciled Father. But these are only two different aspects of the same zealous God, who was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself—Just, and yet the Justifier. This is already contained in the words of Joel: 'The day of the Lord is great and very terrible, and who can abide it? Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even unto Me' (ii. 11, 12). Turned away *from* Him, and fearing His justice, turn *to* Him and flee to His mercy.

It is curious to find this theological truth presented in so unlikely a quarter as an ancient poem of the Norsemen. In an old Eddaic song of the High One—*i.e.*, Odin, their chief deity—which, indeed, is only a paganised rendering of the Gospel story of the Cruci-

* Job xvi. 20, 21 (Delitzsch)

fixion by a Northern bard, the god thus describes the self-immolation of himself to himself:

'I wot that I hung
On the wind-swept tree
Nine nights in all,
Wounded with spear,
And offered to Odin
Myself unto myself.'*

The lines are but a rude version of the text in Hebrews (ix. 14) which says that 'Christ offered Himself without spot to God' (*cf.* Eph. v. 2), He being 'Deus de Deo.'

Thus, as Christians, accepted in His Beloved, the Son in whom He is well pleased, we can look up to the Father in heaven, and say:

'Lo! between our sins and their reward
We set the Passion of Thy Son our Lord. . . .
Only look on us as we are found in Him.'†

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* E. Magnusson, 'Odin's Horse Yggdrasill,' p. 18; De la Saussaye, 'Religion of the Teutons,' p. 231.

† Dr. William Bright.

THE END

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